

HOW DO RELIGION AND NATIONAL ATTITUDES COEXIST IN CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIA?

A Comparative Study of two Religious Groups

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Introduction

August 2012 night is falling over Ohrid, a city hosting the seat of the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church; the Archbishop of Ohrid. Ohrid has 365 old churches, and is sometimes referred to as a Jerusalem of the Balkans. If we follow one of the thin, crooked streets of the hilly landscape in the Ohrid old town, we come to an old church located relatively low in the landscape, the Church of Sta. Sophia. Big trees embrace the small entrance, and after passing signs telling us to be silent and not carry food, beverages or use cameras, we enter an open room with loose chairs, decorated walls and pillars. The walls behind the altar have carved crosses, but the most interesting carving we find is on a wooden throne standing by the pillar in the right half of the room. A strategically tied ribbon prevents the throne from being sat on, and the seat is occupied by an icon of Christ. Small crosses are carved on the back of the throne, accompanied by something resembling either a star or a sun which appears to be surrounded by cones. It is the Vergina Sun, from the old flag of Macedonia, here on a wooden throne in a central, old church in Ohrid. An inscription on the throne says it is dedicated to the late Archbishop of Ohrid. It is a visual, national symbol in a religious context, and it is only one of many.

I have long felt a pull to the Slavic Eurasia, this part of the globe stretching from the Czech Republic in Central Europe to the borders to China in East Asia. The ethnic and religious heterogeneity makes Macedonia interesting. Many Balkan countries are multi-religious and multiethnic, but Macedonia is the only one of these mentioned in the Bible. The thesis will ask whether this spurs religious awareness amongst citizens, and influences people's religious and national identification, as a part of the topic in the title.

Macedonia has Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism, and a high percentage of Muslims. Macedonia also has archaic roots. The lines to the past have been frequently used in visual expressions in the city center of Skopje, the capital. These figures are not only giving it a highly different expression compared to when I first visited Macedonia, in 2006. Then the square was simply an open place with an old stone bridge. Now that open space has a 24 meters tall statue of Alexander the Great, standing on a pillar surrounded by fountains. Alexander's monument has the company of several national historical statues, new bridges and buildings in ancient architecture. Many of the statues have crosses. The square and some other places are barely recognizable. It is not possible not to notice the changes by this art project, called Skopje 2014, and is meant to decorate the city center. While Skopje 2014 is still fresh, I believe now is the time for research about national and religious identity.

The thesis will start with a chapter presenting the historical background. The third chapter, about Macedonia today, will participate in making the framework for the thesis. Much can be said about Macedonia today, and I will focus on the social situation, with religion and ethnicity. Since Macedonia is a multi-religious land, I will also focus on attitudes to this heterogeneity. To talk about Macedonia today, one must mention continuity with the past, which the following chapter will do. Continuity with the past is an interesting common feature in both religious and national expressions in Macedonia. The statue of Alexander the Great will be analyzed in the following chapter, as an example of expressions of continuity. The analysis will discuss expressions of national attitudes and expressions of religion in the monument. I will, using theories about religion (for example sacred space), analyze the monument, and I hope to see if the use of the monument is a part of a religious act. Then the following chapter will ask where the limits between these identifications – national and religious – go. The chapter will discuss the blending of national and religious identities, asking whether they are separated in the chosen religious communities. Same chapter will look at the co-existence of national attitudes and religion. Last chapter will discuss respondents' ideas for improvements of the social tensions they discussed in "Macedonia Today". It will take threads from the previous chapters further – as well as the collected data – to look at the suggestions for solutions to the problems found in Macedonia today. "Macedonia Today" will focus on religion by discussing data revealing respondents' attitudes on how religion can help the society ease social tensions.

Academic discussions

The theoretical framework for the thesis includes contributions of the academic discussion about religion and national attitudes. The term mostly used is nationalism. The introduction chapter will start with a short chronology to give an overview of the development of the academic discussion about national attitudes and religion. The chronology will develop into a deeper look at the research of Anthony D. Smith, since I believe some of his opinions might be particularly useful in my thesis. Mark Juergensmeyer will then take the torch, for the sake of his discussion about religion and nationalism together. I will also mention one of Juergensmeyer's arguments about secular nationalism. Afterwards Ivan Ivecovic will take the word, to serve as an example of the research focused on the Balkans.

Annika Hvithamar writes in the book *Holy Nations and Global Identities* that nineteenth century romanticism imagined the nation, and the people, as holy.¹ The history of the nation and its people was treated as sacred, and the nation was protected by God. Jean-Jacques Rousseau thus predicted how the ideology of nationalism was to be linked to religion.

In the twentieth century, scholars approaching nationalism and religious traditions found resemblances between these two variables. An example, by Carlton Hayes 1961 found nationalism similar to religion in the willingness to die, live and fight for the nation. Hayes also found the similarity that both religion and nationalism involve the will, intellect and emotions of human beings.²

In the 1980's the “religious sense”³ of nationalism was the focal point. The question often asked was what makes a nation, and how nationalism got its hegemony. The scholars have, since, asked how nationalism functions.⁴ I would like to mention Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm as examples of this research. Gellner states that secular nationalists' affection for their culture is not based in any religion. They value faith for the positive impact it has for the culture and nation.⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, another voice in how nationalism functions, explores the power structures of nationalism, including the role of religion.⁶ Both Hobsbawm and Gellner conclude that confessional religion often serves as an ally to nationalism, that in the 18th and 19th century religious organizations in Europe were adapted to fit the goals of a nation state or a national movement. Anthony D. Smith analyzes how contemporary nationalism shows heritage from religion. Smith regards nationalism as a “religion for the people”; the object of devotion is the sacred community of the people, and not a deity. Long-lasting attachments to a “holy land” is pointed out, as is longing for a golden age.⁷ This attachment and longing serve to create a meaning, for the rulers and the people. Smith points out three tendencies in the process of nationalism replacing religion; first comes nationalism as the heir to religion (in organizing and structuring society). Second comes religion as an ally to nationalism, religious confessions being used to adapt for nationalistic purposes, which leads to ethnic religion. Third comes nationalism taking over for confessional religion; with phenomena like myths and rituals.⁸ It was for long

¹ Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 111f

² Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 112

³ Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 101ff

⁴ Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 101ff

⁵ Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 107

⁶ Ibid, 107

⁷ Ibid, 107

⁸ Ibid, 107

believed, among scientists, that nationalism would replace religion.⁹ Talal Asad asks, in the book *Nation and Religion*, whether nationalism is the religion of the nation state. Asad writes it is possible nationalism might origin from religion.¹⁰

Mark Juergensmeyer mentions ethnicity and religion as an anchor, used by local leaders, of so called ethno-religious movements, to gain politic loyalty as well as their own identity, in the book *The Postnational Self. Belonging and Identity*,¹¹ Juergensmeyer claims these local leaders use ancient history, pictures and concepts to bring back old time, but also to serve the needs of current politics. Revolutionary features in images about the use of primeval cultures can make such movements confronting or even violent.¹² Ethno-religious nationalism in today's post-nationality has been used to prove that the globalization has not embraced the whole globe. Juergensmeyer argues the contrary, that ethnic and religious movements might be reactions to globalization, as anti-global ideologies. Some of these anti-global ideologies aim to create ethno-religious nation states.¹³ Juergensmeyer says the ideology of nation states are against secular nationalism, because the concept of a nation state is funded on the thought that a state is created by the people, and given a national area. In secular nationalism, the nation gets authority from secular ideas about social equality rather than ethnic ties and sacral mandates. The constructed state Yugoslavia was held together by secular nationalism.¹⁴ I consider Juergensmeyer's words "ethno-religious nationalism" highly relevant for my thesis and points at the national attitudes my work focuses on.

The research on the former Yugoslavia has found reason to suggest nationalism has experienced de-secularization, after the division and during the creation of nations. "Religion has filled the vacuum after the communism, and given post-communistic countries (struggling with defining new identities) integrating framework", Ivan Ivekovic writes.¹⁵ Religion is associated with ethno-nationalistic projects, which might give feelings of continuity with the pre-communistic past.¹⁶ Religion and nationalism, Iveković says, do not need to exclude each other, but might strengthen each other, when people use all spiritual and cultural materials available in the struggle to re-define ruined group identity.¹⁷

⁹ Ivan Iveković, "Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion", 523

¹⁰ Van der Veer and Hartmut: *Nation and Religion*, 179

¹¹ Hedetoft and Hjort, *The Postnational Self*, 7

¹² Hedetoft and Hjort, *The Postnational Self*, 8f

¹³ Hedetoft and Hjort, *The Postnational Self*, 3ff

¹⁴ Hedetoft and Hjort, *The Postnational Self*, 6

¹⁵ Ivekovic, "Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion", 534

¹⁶ Ivekovic, "Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion", 534

¹⁷ Ivekovic, "Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion", 523

De-secularization of politics is not only a post-Yugoslav phenomenon, which Iveković refers to Robertson 1989 to underline, also giving an example of previous research. A few more theories in this discussion that have meant much to my work, are written by Svein Mønnesland (professor of Slavic studies, University of Oslo), John Binns (director of the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge), and Nils G. Holm (professor of religious studies at Åbo Akademi). These theories will be fully introduced and explained in the theory chapter. The theories by Mønnesland and Binns have made the theme religion and nationality extraordinary interesting to me, but the choice of theme was made already before reading these.

Methods of Research

The field work in Macedonia has focused on what a selection of religious people mean is the identification, place and mission of religion in relation to the national attitudes. This includes how they regard the relationships between religion and nationality. A selection of national symbols and the attitudes to religious and ethnic heterogeneity are also addressed. During spring 2012 I performed three months of research in two churches in Macedonia. One represented the majority population; the Macedonian Orthodox Church (mostly people associated with the Theological Faculty). The other church was a much smaller and younger one, namely the Evangelical Church of the Republic of Macedonia. I choose the Macedonian Orthodox Church for being the majority, and the Theological Faculty to recruit a wide selection of active members. It is also relevant that this church is a nation church. The Evangelical Church was chosen for being a small, young and growing church, and it is also relevant that it is a Free Church. The hospitality and helpfulness of people in the Evangelical Church and the Theological Faculty must also be mentioned as determining factors. The field work also interviewed two experts, Smith the historian (from now on, whenever I mention “Smith” in this thesis, I refer to this person) from the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, and Volku the politics scholar, from the University of St. Cyril and Methody. These two shared their knowledge. I also got permission to use notes from a guided tour in the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, Skopje. The most important data the research collected was qualitative interviews, but 50 questionnaires were also completed. These were split equally between both churches. In the Evangelical Church they were given to the attendants after a service, and in the Macedonian Orthodox Church some were given to a selection of people in a park, and some to students at the theological faculty. The results turned out as a mix between

qualitative and quantitative data, since many respondents wrote additional comments on the cards, which asked to choose one or more of the listed options.

All the names of respondents are fake names. I have purposely given the members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church names starting with M or N, and the members of the Evangelical Church names starting with E, or another vowel. This will make it easier to keep the seventeen people in order.

The topic is a comparative task. During the field work I was trying hard to collect two interviews per person and ten people in each church. But because the Evangelical Church in Skopje has a small number of members, and these enjoy friendly interaction with one another, I choose to settle with seven respondents there (ten in the Macedonian Orthodox Church), for the sake of maintaining anonymity in the small society. All respondents were not asked identical questions, but I made sure to have all questions answered by people from both churches. The selection of which questions to which people followed Raymond L. Gorden's¹⁸ theories, that people in different positions have different perspectives and thus will typically give different answers, for example active members, passive members, insiders, outsiders and marginals. My marginal respondents, Eric and Anne, are located in Macedonia but do not come from Macedonia and are not Macedonians, but since they are associated with the Evangelical Church, they are not outsiders. Eric and Anne were asked questions about the society, and how they as foreigners experience the situation in Macedonia today. In both churches respondents were recommended by other respondents, or by gate openers. I also contacted some on my own initiative, by talking and interacting a little, before asking them if they wanted to take part. Relevant data was given by everyone I approached.

In both churches priests and laypeople, men and women were interviewed. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Mihajlo and Nikola are employed at the Theological Faculty but are not clerics, Martin is a priest, while Milo, Markus and Mirek & Mihail are theology students. Marta, Manev and Nenad are the only ones not associated to the Theological Faculty. These three are passive members, they confess belief in God and association to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but are not attending Church regularly. In the Evangelical Church Evangelion is a pastor, while all the rest of the respondents; Anne, Eric, Alex, Elena, Ivana and Adrian are active members. They attend Church regularly, and interact actively with the other attendants. They also

¹⁸ Gorden, *Interviewing*, 148f

engage in volunteer work, if not in the Evangelical Church, in other protestant denominations, and society-focused institutions like the House of Prayer and Lidija Women's Clinic. These people were chosen to cover a variety. Some people, like Markus and Milo, and Eric and Anne, have similar positions, which was also beneficial, since their answers sometimes met and sometimes differed, which contributes to cover a satisfying degree of variety. Most of the interviews were individual, but Marta and Manev were together at the interview, as were the two people I call Mirek & Mihail. I count both of these couples as good friends, and their interactions, and the fact that they were together during the interviews, has influenced the answers. During the interview with Mirek & Mihail, they fulfilled each other's sentences so much, nodded and agreed so much I prefer to refer to them as one person.

Another method used in the field work was analysis of visual statues and monuments. This method is very much in line with the methods learned in art analysis, with descriptions of the expressions and the composition, followed by interpretation. This is tightly added rich analysis of religious symbolism.

How do people in Macedonia react when approached by a foreigner who wants to use what they say in a thesis? Tourism is not uncommon in Macedonia; much of the state budget is from tourism. Many people in Macedonia are also clever in English, and have been abroad. Potential sources of error include variations in the place and time for the interview, as well as my own appearance and performance as an interviewer. The locations for the interviews have been varying, as have the seasons and the times of the day. I have, mostly, dared to believe most of my respondents would respond similarly to a different interviewer and at different occasions, but the question of language barriers, polite evasiveness and other misunderstandings are considered. The people I interviewed are different, said different things and react differently. Some required breaks during interviews, to socialize and talk about our families and matters about Macedonia that was irrelevant for the interview, but were burning to be talked about. Others did not take the time to chat at all, much depending on their schedule. One had to try different interaction methods and notice people's reactions to see what worked. Some asked about religion in Norway, and my personal faith and practice. I am a believing Protestant, which might have made the field work easier, by relieving some compassionate, missioning hearts the "burden of saving my soul"; the interviews would not get influenced by attempts to convert me.

Some interviews needed a translator. It was actually very convenient to finish writing down the answers while the translator asked next question in Macedonian. I used both voice recorder and

notepad, sometimes one of them, and sometimes both. Both had flaws and benefits, a few times my handwriting failed to be understood, and a few times certain words disappeared from the voice recorder. But neither occurred often. Some respondents advised me to use a recorder, and some were not comfortable with the recorder being used. A few times respondents said relevant things outside interviews, which I used as data, if they allowed it. After the first interviews I learned how to move my whole arm in a certain rhythm so the writing would go fast, and become readable. I also learned how to look the respondent in the eyes while writing.

Religion

Already during my first interview, at the Evangelical Church, the respondent I call Elena made a distinction between “religion” and “faith”, explaining why: “faith” is the individual belief, while “religion” is the institution. A definition of religion must, to cover the need in my work, have terminology that can be related to this separation between the institution and the individual engagement. Milo, a student at the Faculty of Macedonian Orthodox Theology, said religion is about communication between human being and God, while faith involves secular matters. Nenad, a less active member of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, referred to a conversation about the same subject with other members of the church, some secular, some believing. They all agreed “faith” is the personal belief, while “religion” is the institution, often controlled by a power institution and therefore easily used in politics. Elena’s statement, that religion is responsible for many atrocities, seems to agree with what Nenad and Milo say. Religion is, to Nenad and his friends, in the broadest sense a group of similarly believing people. Markus, another student at the Theological Faculty, said religion and church are a result of faith bringing people together, and thus seems to agree more with Nenad than with his fellow student. I would like to take with me the Milo’s words about faith including secular matters, and focus on the statements by Elena, Markus, Nenad and his friends. More of my respondents have resembling opinions about this. Ivana, a member of the Evangelical Church, confirms what has been my impression since my first visit to Macedonia: “Religion is something you don’t have to believe in, while faith is something you believe in. Religion can be inherited, while faith is something you have personally”. Adrian, from the same church, says faith is very intimate, and that only God knows who is a true believer.

Nils G. Holm (professor of religious studies at Åbo Akademi) has, in his book *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge. En psykofenomenologisk studie*, approached the question about the limitations as well as the cultural determinations of the term “religion.” He says *the holy* has been regarded as the most important, and maybe the most all-embracing concepts in religion, while religion itself is more limited. Every individual can, in some way, have a sense for *holiness*, while *religion* is associated with forms of fellowship, like churches, mosques and religious groups.¹⁹

Holm does explain what means with limited, but is not referring who calls religion limited, or what research is behind it. Saying every individual can have a sense of holiness is highly generalizing, and highly depending on definitions, which he does not mention in connection with this. Holm’s explanation of the holy makes sense with the understanding of faith and religion in the discussions above. Holm’s theories support my discussion about religion and faith, by confirming the limits in the term religion, and by explaining the importance of a different, more embracing concept. To adapt Holm’s words to my work, I would like to replace *the holy* with a term in Macedonian language. This word was used by the respondents, and since it is in their mother tongue it gives a terminology framed by their cultural conditions. The word is *vera*, which is Macedonian and means both “religion” and “faith”. The word “religion”, *religija*, is also used, but is very new in Macedonian language; it has only been present since modern time, according to Volku the politics scholar, Smith the history scholar, and Nikola the employee at the Theological Faculty. When I used a translator for the interviews, he mostly used the term *vera*, and *religija* when the question of the understanding of religion and faith required a specification that I or the respondent meant religion.

Religija includes the institutional parts of religion, like common prayers, rituals, sacraments and church buildings, while *vera* includes what religion does not, faith in non-religious matters. Despite *vera* including secular matters, in my work it is more specific than religion, because here it will only be used about the religious matters, or holy, as Holm explained it. In my thesis I intend to use *vera* about the individual, reflective part of religion, the part involving spiritual, individual engagement. *Religija* will be used about the official, external character, the institution, with church buildings, priests, rituals and so. *Religija* will include the meso-and macrocosmic side, *vera* the microcosmic side. *Religija* is, when emptied from *vera*, often not separated from

¹⁹ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 17f

cultural heritage. A good example of is what Ivana said, that *religija* is inherited and does not require *vera*. Nenad says he is not too religious and explains he likes the Christian Church, prays for his loved ones, believes in God, but disapproves the priests. It looks like Nenad confesses to *vera*, but only in a very limited sense to *religija*. These examples are meant to illustrate how these terms can be used, and what they can explain. Using the terms *religija* and *vera* is convenient in distinguishing between different qualities of religion. Qualities I have in mind are qualities which respondents like Elena have distinguished between, when explaining why she consciously uses the word faith instead of religion. In my thesis I will continue to use the terms *vera* and *religija*, when I find it useful to highlight different sides and qualities of religion.

National Attitudes, Nationality, Nationalism, National Identifications and Ethnicity

Sara Kamali, in *The Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, defines *nation* as a sociocultural entity, consisting of people sharing the same history, language and culture.²⁰ Olivier W. Vonk, in the book *Dual Nationality in the European Union*, calls *nation* “people with an aspiration to be politically self-determining²¹.” One problem the framework suggested by Vonk is that he does not say whether these people are a movement, group, society or so. Vonk does not say what motivates to the aspiration to be politically self-determining, but these motivations are listed in Kamali’s explanation in encyclopedia mentioned above. Vonk’s definition is much more focused on the functional qualities than is Kamali’s definition. The latter explains the construction of a nation. I would say the definitions complete each other, because Kamali’s explains what the nation consists of - people sharing the same history, language and culture – and Vonk’s explains what this entity of people aspires to; political self-determination.

The next definition I will mention is rather old, but I consider it relevant as an insight in the development of contemporary theories and definitions. *Nationality* is defined by Sophie Bryant in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* as a quality or a complex of qualities, in a group of people, which combines them in a nation.²² Nationality takes place in different degrees in different individuals. Aggressive nationalism (which, according to a politics scholar I interviewed, overlaps the common understanding of nationalism in Macedonia today) is the wish for personal gain from the effect of national operations. All events in national history, national literature, reforms, custom, traditions, ways of thought, tradition, manner, etc, contribute to senses of national unity.

²⁰ *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, s.v. “Nation State”

²¹ Vonk, *Dual Nationality in the European Union*, 19

²² *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. “Nationality”

I would like to add religion in the list of factors that contribute to a sense of national unity. I put *national identification* very close to *nationalism*, but chose to see national identification as much more psychological, and less political.

The difference between nationality in a legal and ethnic sense is also reflected in the distinction made by Verwilghen between a ‘nationalité de fait’ and a ‘nationalité de droit’. The first refers to the sociological and ethnic meaning of the term in the sense of belonging to a Volkstum (nationality as a historic-biological term). Under this definition of nationality, a State can thus be comprised of more nationalities. A ‘nationalité de droit’ has a different meaning and refers to the politico-legal bond between individual and State.²³

Svein Mønnesland, professor in Slavic studies, University of Oslo, offers in the book *Før Jugoslavia og etter* a what he calls objective approach to a definition of nationality, defining on the basis of for example language, religion, traditions, etc. The subjective approach Mønnesland mentions defines on the basis of the feeling of belonging to a community, common heritage, shared values, a desire to create a shared future. The subjective approach let those who belong to the nation determine for themselves whether they belong to the community. Yugoslavian politics defined *nationality* subjectively, Mønnesland argues, and explains that no one needed to specify language or nationality of the parents. One could be whatever one wanted.²⁴ Mønnesland defines nationalism as a political principle, with the ideology of national and political unities meeting.²⁵ What exactly is the meaning of “national and political unities meeting” is not explained. I understand “meeting” as finding common wishes and ideologies, but as a definition of a historical and political ideology, I find Mønnesland’s explanation vague. “It often means the wish of every nation to get its own state,”²⁶ he continues, but this I consider an example, not an explanation.

Nationalism has two faces, Mønnesland says. The first is liberating nationalism, wanting to promote identity, cultural and political liberation. The second one is suppressing nationalism, wanting to expand national borders and suppress minorities²⁷. Nation building means creating a common national conscience, written language, national institutions etc. This process has tendencies of homogenization, melting of different cultures, and erasing of differences²⁸. Other - according to Mønnesland - negative sides of nationalism are a need for self- asserting, and

²³ Vonk, *Dual Nationality in the European Union*, 20

²⁴ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, 21

²⁵ Ibid, 21

²⁶ Ibid, 21

²⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, 24

²⁸ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, 22

domination of other groups during difficult times, as a defense against the feeling of threats. The word “state people” means that these need to be the majority, giving little room for minorities. Deportation, assimilation and in the worst case genocide are possible outcomes of the negative side of nationalism, Mønnesland explains.²⁹

Ethnicity has, in some interviews, been placed as a synonym to *nationality*. Most of my respondents are ethnic Macedonians, the majority in the country, and with a name similar to the name of the country. I find it suitable to treat *nationality* and *ethnicity* as approximately the same variable in this thesis. One difference that can separate them is that *ethnicity* is more dependent on genetic heritage than *nationality*. I will discuss this difference in the chapters called “Macedonia Today” and “Continuity with the Past”. The focus in my thesis – and in this field – is, after all, religion.

Mønnesland’s theories about different faces – or, as I prefer to call it, effects – of nationalism, are highly relevant when approaching national attitudes in Macedonia. Mønnesland’s explanation can also be used to cover different ways people regard nationalism in Macedonia, as well as explain why my research is approaching national attitudes, instead of just nationalism. Before starting the research I was informed that the word *nationalism* had to be avoided in order to find respondents for qualitative interviews, because of the negative associations to the term. Therefore the term had to be split, analyzed, defined and gathered, under the umbrella term *national attitudes*.

This introduction started with a narrative description about a national symbol in a religious context in Macedonia, and continued with an academic discussion. My field work was introduced, before the chapter started discussing definitions on key terms. One can do research on many different themes in Macedonia and the rest of the Balkan countries, but I strongly think that one must first understand the religion, nationality and ethnicity.

²⁹ Ibid, 22

The Historical Background

Smith, a historian currently employed by the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, answers every question with energetic eager. He promises to approach religion later, and explains that national pride is an outcome of the French revolution. France became a country after that. People started saying "we are French", "we are Russian", or "we are Belorussian". Turks called themselves "Ottomans" till 1928. In the 19th century nationalities, the idea of nations, that people from France are French, and people from Athens started saying they were from Greece, got established. This chapter will give an introduction to the history of Macedonia, focused on religion, but keeping national attitudes in mind. This includes the national identifications and pride Smith mentions, but also the previously definitions, where political goals play parts. The chapter will start with ancient backgrounds, and this theme will, under a second headline, continue with focus on the post-roman time. Then the chapter will shortly tell about the Great Schism, and provide a few features on how the Orthodox Church came to be formed further. After this the chapter will tell about Macedonia under the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Macedonia for several centuries. The next themes will be desires for independence, the chapter will explain possible reasons for growing national consciousness, a few relevant figures, and events in the struggle for the cause. After this comes the turn for Yugoslavia to enter the history chapter, which will focus on the conditions for the practice of religion and nationalism during these times. The post-Yugoslav time, which is not yet over, will finish the chapter, after telling about the riot in 2001.

Ancient history

In the ancient world Macedonia was one of the great powers. Christianity started here, in Europe, with Lydia, after this followed an epidemic, Smith the historian says. The Biblical apostle Paul brought Christianity to Macedonia; it was early established in Thessaloniki. Until 732-3 Greece, Macedonia and Crete were under the Pope of Rome.³⁰ The Romans had conquered the whole

³⁰ *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Orthodoxy*, "Macedonia", 299f

Balkan peninsula from year 200 BCE, to year 14 ACE. They built roads and cities, and Romanized the people. One of the cities was called Scupi, now Skopje.³¹ Smith the historian says Constantine established Christianity in 323. The historian continues by describing the Macedonians, Serbs, Croats and Greeks of the time feeling Roman. After the division of the empire, the people in the Byzantine Empire still felt Roman.

In the earliest church, Per Bjørnar Grande explains in his book *Den Ortodokse Kirke*, women as well as men could take leader positions. There was no sharp limit between church and state in the East Church; these two were in a tight cooperation.³² Important dogmas were to identify with God, and connect to the realization of love.³³ Emperor Justinian (527-565), Grande says, is the closest one can come to a pure theocracy. The emperor was seen as God's representative, equally with the apostles. But if he abandoned his piety he should not be obeyed.³⁴ The icon art has inspired large parts of the Christian world. The theology was in the 700's what Grande calls «stiff and repeating» and theological force was fetched from the ancient church texts. (Grande 51)

The Post-Roman time

“In the 600's the Roman Empire ceased to exist,” Smith says. Svein Mønnesland writes in the book *Før Jugoslavia og etter* that around year 600 Salonika was taken by Slavic intruders, who settled but did not overrun Byzantine control. Till now, the writer says, there has been a Greek-Slavic co-existence. Ohrid was a religious and cultural center, a Slavic episcopal seat was set, and St. Clement of Ohrid, a student of St. Cyril and Methody, was probably the creator of the Cyrillic alphabet. Over 100 churches and a school for Macedonians were proudly called) the first Slavic university. Macedonians and Bulgarians are fighting over who is the origin of the Slavic language³⁵. Smith places the coming and settling of Slavic people to the 700's. What about ancient Macedonians, he asks rhetorically, and answers that people are mixed, many Slavic peoples arrived in Pelloponnes (ancient Sparta). The Balkans are mixed with many civilizations, not only from people who settled in the ancient times, but also French people from the Crusaders. No one has thus the right to make any monopole for connection with the ancient time, Smith argues. Slovenes, Croats and Serbs dominated in the Western Balkan, and founded their own

³¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 29

³² Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 93

³³ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 95

³⁴ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 49f

³⁵ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 131

kingdoms. They got separated from other Slavic settlements when Hungarian tribes invaded, and since these differences increased, they are called South Slavs.³⁶

In the 7th century, people in Macedonia were Christians and felt Christian, not Macedonian, Smith explains, adding that most lived in poverty. Some converted to Islam, because it gave a certain tax relief. This lasted for five centuries, Smith says, referring both to the Ottoman Empire and the identification as Christians.

Simon the Great (893-927) ruled a Bulgarian state including Macedonia, going all the way to the Adriatic ocean. The kingdom was split in two; Tsar Samuil got the west, with Ohrid as capital. Macedonian nationalists like calling this rule the first Macedonian state. But then the Byzantine time came.³⁷



Statue depicting St. Cyril and Methody, at the university with their name. Illustration by Dimitar Gjorgiev

St. Cyril and Methody were two schooled brothers from Salonika, born in the ninth century. The mission they did, by invitation from the prince of Moravia, was successful due to among other things the translation of certain parts of the Bible into a language approximately close to the local mother tongue. Receiving an introduction to Christianity, on a language near the mother tongue,

³⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 32

³⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 132

was something most people in the rest of Europe could barely even dream of. In other words, the spreading of the gospels went smooth in these areas, and the mission went on in Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia. Cyril and Method are regarded as pioneers, and cherished for their ecumenical attitude.³⁸ The alphabet they composed was soon replaced by the Cyrillic, and resulted in the language Church Slavonian (still liturgy language in the Orthodox Church).³⁹ *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Orthodoxy* confirms what I many times have heard about Cyril and Method, them often called “the apostles of the Slavs”. They were already working on their alphabet before leaving for their missionary quest in Moravia. This alphabet was given the name Glagolitic, and the Cyrillic alphabet was developed by one of Cyril’s disciples, St. Clement of Ohrid. One of the first translated books was a liturgical gospel book. Cyril’s tomb, in San Clemente, is a pilgrimage site. The Pope appointed Methodius as arch bishop to the Slavonic nations. The brothers’ exiled disciples, Clement and Naum, continued their missionary work in Ohrid.⁴⁰

The Great Schism

John Lawrence Boojamra writes in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* that during the eight century, relations between the church seats of Rome and Constantinople gradually degenerated. The church seats grew increasingly hostile, while the differences between their ecclesiology and politics increased. Political alliances, like those with Carolingian kings, and the crowning of Charlemagne were involved, as well as making determining factors.⁴¹ Smith the historian calls the early eleventh century the “we all must believe”- age, because of missionaries being sent to distant places to teach. Christianity being split, in 1054, is another consequence of the time, he argues. Mønnesland explains that the split between the Eastern and Western churches goes back to the dividing of the Roman Empire. After time the differences between the churches became more of cultural differences, easily noticed in the Latin languages used in the West, and Greek or Church Slavonic language in the East, the Latin alphabet used in the West, and the Cyrillic alphabet used in the East.⁴² Mønnesland mentions that in the Orthodox Church continuity with the Early Christianity is outlined. They have no central leader like the Pope in Rome. The

³⁸ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 70f

³⁹ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 33

⁴⁰ *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Orthodoxy*, s. v. Cyril and Methodius

⁴¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. “Schism: Christian Schism (Rome and Constantinople)”

⁴² Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 29

Patriarch in Constantinople was, after the Schism; soon get the company of national patriarchs. The Service is in the center, as an image of the kingdom of God, as well as icons.⁴³ Early in the 1200's Macedonia was a part of the "Latinian" kingdom the crusaders made, but the Byzantines made a comeback, lasting to the Serb medieval kingdom in the 1300's. The heavy point was Macedonia, and Skopje became the capital.⁴⁴

And then came the Ottomans

Seljuks were people who later became Ottomans, the Sultan was a Seljukid, but called himself only "Muslim", Smith tells. The last battle for Macedonia was May 1430, in Thessaloniki. Muhammed the Conqueror was against the Byzantine Empire, and 24 years later, the Byzantine Empire was no more. The Ottoman domination starts. Grande says that the fall of the Byzantine Empire as the Ottoman Turks took the areas, is seen as one of the greatest tragedies ever within the Christian world. The relationship between Muslims and Christians has never been the same.⁴⁵

The Orthodox Church enjoyed great influence under the Ottomans, Mønnesland writes.⁴⁶ Turks took over certain sides of the Byzantine system, by letting some religious leaders lead their own religious societies, called millets. The Orthodox Church organized all Christians on Balkan, placing the Patriarch in Constantinople on top. The Catholic Church was seen as the worst enemy, and the Patriarch preferred Ottoman rule, which they felt was to a certain degree protecting them from Catholic mission.⁴⁷ Christian villages were led by elected leaders (*knez*), who became Christian elite, and were to play important roles during the nationalistic movements of the 1800's.⁴⁸ After the Bulgarian Ohrid Patriarchality ended in the late 1700's the Greek Orthodox Church took over the Orthodox Slavs. But the single Orthodox Church societies kept their attachment to "the national", and the Orthodox priests still had much power.⁴⁹ The Orthodox Church played the part the nobles played in the rest of Europe; brought further the national idea.⁵⁰

⁴³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 31

⁴⁴ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 132

⁴⁵ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 74

⁴⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 36

⁴⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 51

⁴⁸ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 53

⁴⁹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 54

⁵⁰ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 55

Many churches were turned into mosques, but most of the time, the Ottomans let Christian subjects alone.⁵¹

Life in Macedonia under the Ottomans

Christian leaders claimed to be over Muslim lords, and that Christianity would one day win, Mønnesland says. The world of the Christian peasants was influenced by crosses and icons, instead of Muslim symbols. This reality was soon to become important to take care of to maintain national conscience. There were few mixed marriages between Christians and Muslims. Leaders from both sides made efforts to avoid mixed marriages, as converting. In the 1800's, the religious freedom increased, there were no longer death penalty for Muslims who returned to Christianity.⁵² Christians subjects paid more taxes, worst was the blood tax; Christian boy children were taken from their homes and brought to Istanbul, where they were converted, and trained to be civil servants. Or in the worst case *janissari*; slave soldiers⁵³. Mønnesland argues life under the Ottomans was easier than life under the Habsburgs, and explains that the Habsburg's farmers were bound to the land. But the Habsburg power did not practice blood tax.⁵⁴ I will therefore challenge Mønnesland's conclusion with a story Volku tells, about the blood tax. Volku mentions stories about *janissari* being sent back to kill their own kin, not knowing about their own origin. One of these was, according to legend, said to be recognized by his mother, because of a scar on his brace. Instead of a happy reunion, the mother said nothing to her son and he acted by order and beheaded her. Volku also tells about young Macedonian women being kidnapped by Muslim lords and army officers, taken to Turkey and converted to Islam, so they could be included in harems. Many young women cut cross-shaped wounds on their foreheads, so the scar would permanently mark them as Christians, thus making them impossible to Islamize, and thus protect them from this kidnapping. A legend about a woman who injured herself to avoid being kidnapped is Sta. Petka, who will be mentioned later.

⁵¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 133

⁵² Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 49

⁵³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 50

⁵⁴

In the early 1800's, suppressed nations discovered their identity and wished autonomy, and the right to use their own culture and language, indicating the start of national movements. They used history to draw lines to times of autonomy and also to golden ages.⁵⁵

Desires for independence

In the 1800's the Ottoman kingdom organized people on the Balkans according to the religion. Orthodox Christians were Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and some Croatians. Catholic Christians were Croatians, Slovenes, Romanians, Slovaks and Italians (and an Albanian minority and some Serbs). Muslims were Bosniaks, Turks, Albanians and a Macedonian minority.⁵⁶

The Bulgarian (1870) exarchate included Macedonia, which the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople disliked. Macedonia thus became a battlefield in the power for hegemony between Bulgaria and Greece. In 1878 Macedonia had been under Turkish rule, and was again under Bulgarian exarchate, and Bulgaria started expanding Bulgarian culture, with Bulgarian schools and bishops in Macedonia. Mønnesland says that also Serbia started schools in Macedonia in the late nineteenth century, in Serbian language.⁵⁷ Bulgaria, Smith says, opened Bulgarian schools in Macedonia, in addition to the exarchate, that tried to convert Macedonians to "not-Greeks". This was after Bulgaria was promised all on Macedonia in the St. Stefano Piece Conference. There was no Macedonian consciousness then, Smith says. People were called "Orthodox people who live here". Macedonians did not feel Macedonian, because of ignorant villagers who prioritized differently, and nation did not mean much to them.

In 1878 there were "Macedonian rebellions" in the village Kresna, Oktober 3, 1893, Smith says. The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization stood up against Ottomans and propaganda from Serbia. Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization provided in 1903 the biggest uprising against the Ottomans. This led to the Balkan Republic of Macedonia, which lasted for 10 days. Military organizations proved most effective. In the 1890's secret Macedonian movements fought against Turkish rule. There were many different groups, having a little variety in their political programs. VMRO is most well-known. The VMRO started in Resen, 1893, and aimed first of all for Macedonian autonomy within a South Slavic union.

⁵⁵ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 55

⁵⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 17

⁵⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 135

Another movement, called The Upper Macedonia-Adrianopol-Commite, was purely pro-Bulgarian. It was started in Sofia 1895, and was supported by Macedonians there. The Upper Macedonia-Adrianopol-Commite succeeded in making the “Macedonian Question” main subject in Bulgarian politics.

In the turn of the centuries (1878-1912), Macedonian national conscience grew stable roots. Earlier most were illiterate, calling themselves Bulgarians if not using local belonging. The literature in Macedonia was in a mix between Macedonian and Bulgarian dialects, with some Church Slavonic. Krste Misirkov (1878-1926), the father of Macedonian nationalism, edited the magazine *Vardar* and the book *About the Macedonian Concerns*.⁵⁸

Wars and rebellions

In 1912 Christian Balkan states stood together to fight the Turks out of Europe. Macedonia was split, most was under Serbia after a war against Bulgaria.⁵⁹ In 1911 to 12, Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia went together in an uprising against the Turks.⁶⁰ October 8th, Montenegro went to war against Turkey, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece follow, and soon Turkey was over won.⁶¹

In 1912, Smith says, war was declared against the Ottomans, it was won, and many Macedonian were members of the resistance. Same year, at the neighbor states wanted to divide Macedonia. One year later, Bulgaria declares war against Serbia and Greece. Macedonia is caught in the middle, which resulted in internal fights. First and second Balkan wars took place with only one year between. Mønnesland adds, to Smith’s words, that the tug of war between the neighbor states resulted in suppressed Macedonian nationalism.⁶² August 10th 1913, Smith continues, Macedonia got divided for the second time, under Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. World War I made Macedonia the south front for the Entente. With Germany and Austria-Hungary close, many Macedonians suffered and cities were destroyed, among these Bitola and Dojra. The museum tour shows wax men sitting in the Paris Peace Conference, where Macedonia was not represented, as an example of Macedonia being in the margin. Bulgaria occupied Macedonia for four days, the guide tells.

⁵⁸ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 138

⁵⁹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 38

⁶⁰ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 139

⁶¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 140

⁶² Ibid, 140

“In 1919 Macedonia was for the third time divided, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia,” Smith tells. Mønnesland explains that VMRO grew forth again under Yugoslavia, Mønnesland tells. By now the organization was without support from Bulgaria.⁶³ The leader, Todor Aleksandrov, therefore chose Macedonian independence, as most Slavic Macedonians wished. But they still called themselves Bulgarians. Co-existence can be organized to avoid conflicts, Mønnesland argues, but considers nationalism dangerous for the very existence of multi-national states.⁶⁴ Macedonians were counted under the category “Serbs and Croats” during the counting 1931, and religion was an important gathering variable.⁶⁵

Yugoslavia and Serbian centralism

In the 1930's more Macedonians accepted Yugoslavia and accepted federal solutions,⁶⁶ but attempts to unite all Yugoslavia's inhabitants into one folk group did not work,⁶⁷ loyalty went to the extended family, village or region, while the state was considered unwanted.⁶⁸ Serbia wanted centralism, and the royal house taking over the power - in Yugoslavia - was Serbian.⁶⁹ Most political parties were based on religious or nationalistic fundaments.⁷⁰ Mønnesland refers to terminologies and law systems to characterize Yugoslavia as a Greater Serbia.⁷¹

When World War II starts 90% of the resistance was by Macedonian partisans, with communists, which leads to Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Smith says. According to Mønnesland the partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito, had people from all of Yugoslavia.⁷² New states saw the light of day after World War II, when several multi-national empires said good night. Yugoslavia⁷³ was the opposite of a nation state, simply because no nation made more than half of the population.⁷⁴

⁶³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 183

⁶⁴ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 24

⁶⁵ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 166

⁶⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 184

⁶⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 186

⁶⁸ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 187

⁶⁹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 167

⁷⁰ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 170

⁷¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 173

⁷² Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 196

⁷³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 23

⁷⁴ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 24

The Yugoslav communist party wanted Macedonia to have national status, Mønnesland explains. The resistance got better organized, and Bulgaria's influence faded.⁷⁵ Novels and poetry found inspiration in incomplete history, rich folklore, myths and folktales. Skopje opened universities, national libraries, science academies, national theatres, and national galleries. Albanians and Turks got their own institutions, like theatres. But the ethnic Macedonian minority was without rights in Yugoslavia, for example when it came to languages.⁷⁶ Religiously Macedonia was under the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is important on Balkan to have an own church in order to be an independent nation, so in 1967 Macedonia started an independent church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church. But none of the Orthodox Churches in Serbia, Greece or Bulgaria acknowledged the church.⁷⁷ The state showed most skepticism to the Catholic Church, as the worst competitive to Tito's regime, but the Orthodox Church was regarded as more state-friendly. But overall, religion schooling was forbidden, religious press stopped, church properties were seized and organizations were dissolved, to limit the power of the church. Many priests were sentenced in provisory trials.⁷⁸ History was suppressed under empires. Tito used terror as a political weapon. All suspected were arrested, wealthy, religious, those with foreign contacts, intellectuals etc. the nationalization was hard, the state had one party, and was communistic.⁷⁹ Macedonia was called South Serbia when under Yugoslavia, Smith says. Macedonia never got a chance to make riots against Yugoslavia, to have a chance to be Macedonia, until today, he argues. Under the Yugoslav regime protesters would be arrested for saying such things. There were no such books 1945-1991. All who wanted to write history of Macedonia were sent to Naked Island (officially called *Goli Otok*), a bare island of dust and stones. The constitution 1974 says «abuse of religion for political targets is forbidden». Clerical activities and religious meetings in private homes were forbidden. People could get jailed for singing nationalistic songs in private company, and political prisoners were tortured.⁸⁰

The Post-Yugoslav Time

⁷⁵ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 197

⁷⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 207

⁷⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 207

⁷⁸ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 209

⁷⁹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 215

⁸⁰ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 227

Tito died in May 1980.⁸¹ There were by now barely mixed marriages between Serbs and Albanians, and Macedonians and Albanians, people did not interact across religious and cultural lines, as was under the Ottomans.⁸² The declaration of independence from Yugoslavia was in 1991. Smith says that by the fall of the communist regime in large parts of Europe, 90% of the people in Macedonia were for independence. There is still fighting for an independent Macedonia, not with weapons, but intellectually. “We have the right to tell who we are. No one has the right to change our name,” Smith the historian argues.

According to Mønnesland the relations between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians were improved in the post-Yugoslav era. An Albanian party was included in the government. But the relationship between Macedonians and Albanians was still split.⁸³ In 1994-95 Albanians wanted to start an Albanian-speaking university in Tetovo, but as the state said no, differences were again on fire. The opening of the university was accepted in the end, but the relationships were still deeply split. «With all the odds against themselves, Macedonia still managed to tremble on and keep the peace in a region affected by war and unrest”.⁸⁴

The Near-Civil War 2001

The appearance of NLA bred common anxiety. January 2001 a bomb exploded on a train between Skopje and Kicevo. NLA took the responsibility for this too.⁸⁵ The National Liberation Army, or Macedonian UÇK, was a military organization of people with Albanian background.

The NLA had previously claimed the responsibility for an attack on a police station in Tearce, killing one and wounding three. The NLA justified use of violence by calling the Macedonian state a reign of terror.

February 16th, 2001 journalists were kidnapped in by armed men of Albanian background, Tanusevci, Macedonia. NLA-men. They had declared the village “liberated”, and did not allow Macedonians there. Macedonian Border Patrol unit entered the Tanisevci, and forced the NLA to flee over the Kosovo border. NLA characterized themselves as working for the rights of the Albanian minority, while the Macedonian officials branded them as terrorists. NATO came in,

⁸¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 229

⁸² Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 237

⁸³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 363

⁸⁴ Ibid, 363

⁸⁵ Neofotistos, *The Risk of War*, 39

fought between the armies, in the end, five miles from Skopje. The signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, that improved the conditions of the Albanian population, ended the conflict.⁸⁶ Macedonia's current prime minister, Ljupco Georgivski, and his Albanian ruling partner, Arben Xhaferi, condemned the bomb attacks, but their planting of doubt in whether the NLA existed, made the politics in Macedonia seem unclear and doubtful.⁸⁷ Tensions and uncertainty after 2001... after the riot most Macedonians and Albanians supported the Ohrid agreement. Yet many Macedonians also and still felt forced to accept this.⁸⁸

In August 2012 the Defense Minister, Fatmir Besimi, was criticized by many for laying flowers and bowing before an NLA monument near Kumanovo, a former NLA stronghold.⁸⁹

Churches and Culture

The first monuments in the project "Skopje 2014" were erected summer 2011. The project is officially meant to give the neglected, grey-looking center of the Macedonian capital a more monumental appearance. The inspiration is from the architecture of Classic Antiquity, with marble and bronze as the most prominent materials. The project plans to include almost 20 buildings, including, museums, theatres, concert halls, hotels and administrative offices, and 20 statues, including a triumphant arch and an obelisk, as well.⁹⁰ This was met with very different reactions; everything between dislike and tears of joy. Much of the criticism is about ethnicity, but according to my impression, the worries about the high costs is the most prominent critic against the project. The costs are said to be from 80 to over 500 million euros, and is financed with tax money. Architects have criticized the project for lacking contemporary design; nearly all the figures are in classic antique style. The people the statues portray represent a variety of characters in the history of Macedonia, on the square one sees for example Tsar Samoil and Justinian I, the revolutionaries Goce Delcev and Dame Gruev, and Metodija Andonov-Cento, the first Macedonian president after World War II. The costs are said to be from 80 to over 500 million euros, and is financed with tax money. Some say the project is meant to distract people from Macedonia's problems with poverty and unemployment. Architects have criticized the project for lacking contemporary design; nearly all the figures are in classic antique style.

⁸⁶ Neofotistos, *The Risk of War*. 1f

⁸⁷ Neofotistos, *The Risk of War*. 37f

⁸⁸ Neofotistos, *The Risk of War*. 118ff

⁸⁹ Marusic, "Macedonian Minister Slated For Honoring Albanian Fighters"

⁹⁰ Marusic, "Skopje 2014: The new face of Macedonia, updated"

The Macedonian Orthodox Church became the focal point for national and ethnic pride to many, both in Macedonia and in diaspora. This especially after Macedonia's independence.⁹¹ After the communism rights to practice the religion freely were set to life. This led to re-use of much pre-revolution literature, but it was still difficult to stay updated on philosophical and theological development, because of the suppression during the war. In the 1990's this improved.⁹² Communion became important, some would say even more important than morality, ideas and conviction. The communion is the church, the church is the communion. Communion fellowship became the center of the church, not the hierarchy of priests, so the liturgical language could be the civic language.⁹³ People were skeptic to theories and reflections separated from religious practice; faith, surrender and choice were preferred. The human freedom was seen as a part of our nature, the original sin was not stressed, like Luther often did⁹⁴. There also appeared a rigid national understanding of Orthodox Churches. The inner dialogue between the Orthodox Churches was problematic.⁹⁵

Alex, from the Evangelical Church, wants to add that during the Yugoslav regime the church had no right to give people marriage. "After Macedonia got independent married couples came to priests and asked them to bless their marriages, even people who had been married for long."

This history chapter opened with a few words by Smith the historian. More of his interview answers will be used in further chapters presenting how Macedonians today consider their history. The chapter continued with ancient times, which looked at the post-roman times. The Great Schism was mentioned after this, because of its relevance for the history of the East Orthodox Church. The chapter further told a little about the development of this church. One relevant happening for the history of Macedonia and the Orthodox Church is the Ottoman Empire, of which the chapter told next. Macedonia being conquered by the Ottoman Empire is, as has been explained, highly relevant for how national consciousness grew forth in Macedonia. This chapter mentioned riots and desires for independence, and some of the consequences of this. Yugoslavia and conditions for practicing religion and expressing national pride came next. In the end, the chronology told about the post-Yugoslav time, and what happened in the riot in 2001. I hope to have given good presentations of all, and a politically correct image of the 2001 riot.

⁹¹ *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Orthodoxy*, s.v. "The Macedonian Orthodox Church"

⁹² Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 86

⁹³ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 87

⁹⁴ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 88

⁹⁵ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 89

History never ends, and next chapter will continue the themes brought up here, by discussing Macedonia today.

Macedonia Today According to my Respondents

It is late, and when I reach my small apartment in Skopje, a night in April 2012, a text message shows concern. A Macedonian friend wants to know if I have reached home, because this night five people were shot in Skopje. But except from tired feet I am fine. The homicide victims were all male, most around the age of twenty. One was in his forties, and they were all of Macedonian ethnicity. There is absolutely nothing that could indicate the murderers being of Albanian ethnicity, or even non-Macedonian, but my friend and I fear these technical proof or lack of proof means nothing to many Macedonians. We fear this will lead to more tensions and anger. Another day, in August 2012, I am talking to Ivana at a café under the crowns of large trees. She explains that she considers the cross on Vodno, officially meant to celebrate 2000 years of Christianity, to be a big provocation. It is seen in the town called Tetovo where the majority is Muslim Albanians. She understands if these would dislike this, and says a multiethnic place you must be very careful. "I think it is a great provocation for Muslims in 2001, but it cannot alone have caused the conflict," Ivana states, referring to the riot in 2001. Anne says the cross on Vodno indicates Christian Macedonians marking the land as theirs, demonstrating the presence of their belief, which many Albanians take as offense. This cross is mentioned as an example of a public, religious symbol in Macedonia, and the reactions against this, considering the religious and ethnic heterogeneity. We find, when also looking at the news about the homicides, a situation that is tensed and difficult, we see a Christian symbol causing negative reactions from Christians, we see a religious symbol representing something else than religion; a claim of power. We also find abilities to regard a symbol from other people's perspective. And we see considerations regarding Christianity in Macedonia, and co-existence of people with different backgrounds. In this chapter all these themes will be approached.

This chapter will end the history chronology by approaching the situation in Macedonia today. This includes a presentation of the two religious societies my research focuses on; the Evangelical Church and the Theological Faculty, the latter since the Macedonian Orthodox Church is very much presented in the history chapter. Interviews about Macedonia today, which are mostly focused on the ethnic heterogeneity, interviews about media, will be followed by a

discussion about ethnic tensions in media. After this the chapter carries on with interviews approaching the question about ethnic homogeneity, and then about Christianity in Macedonia today. The last part of the chapter will be about interviews concerning ethnic and religiously mixed marriages. I find all these headlined themes relevant and basic for an understanding framework for the work and the reader of this thesis.

The Evangelical Church of the Republic of Macedonia

After a bit longer walk along the main boulevard (Boulevard Partisanska Odridi), and a turn to the left, one sees a two-floor, bright yellow house. A text on the house wall says AGAPE. EVANGELICAL CHURCH SKOPJE. One can enter the house through the door towards the street, or walk in through the gate to the right hand side. Then one sees a small building straight forward, with thin walls and many windows, which is the location for the services. This room has plenty of chairs, a big screen, and modern music instruments, as well as microphones. But let us now return to the small, open space between the houses, here we look to the right hand side, and see a small house with an open door. Inside there is a kitchen and a big table. The atmosphere in the small open space is protected and relaxed, it is where people stand and talk after the service. People of all ages can be seen here. The bright yellow two floor building has another kitchen, offices, a room for children, a few dorms, among other things. People walk in and out, and no one makes any cross-sign when entering.

What separates the Evangelical Church from other Protestant denominations? Most of this information is given by the respondent called Evangelion, a priest in this church, who has for very long time been highly active. Is this work counting on his information as true, or valid? I have no data speaking against Evangelion's story, neither from other respondents or written/online media. Some of the potential facts Evangelion mentions are mentioned by others, so the validity seems to be in his favor.

“Evangelical” is a general name, Evangelion explains. The name is coming from the ancient Greek word *evangelion*, so Evangelical church means "New Testament Church"; not state church, but free church. *Evangeliska Crkva vo R. of Macedonia*, stressing the ancient Greek word *Evangelie* meaning Gospel. The church started in the last year of the Yugoslav regime, as a branch of the Christ Pentecostal Church in Yugoslavia, headquartered in Croatia. When

Yugoslavia got split and there was independence, the church was given a new name, and now "Pentecostal" had no meaning, Evangelion states. "Evangelical" means, to Evangelion, that the church is welcoming all, and to him the name explains without any direct, reducing, fencing meaning, like 'Baptist' makes people think it's all about re-baptizing, 'Presbyterian' makes people think it's all about the priests... Evangelical means not Catholic or Orthodox, but Protestant. In general, all free-churches are Evangelical, the respondent explains. Still, the main issue, is that the Church is not focused on one thing, except the Gospel."

The commandment coming from Jesus, Matt 28:19-20 "make all my disciples," was the main motivation, or call, for starting this Evangelical Church, Evangelion continues. He says there were always people who want to learn about the Bible, and learn how to live according to it. These are the main reasons for starting the church. As was high numbers of people unaware of the Gospels, and unengaged in any church. Evangelion also mentions the relevance of the current need for the Gospel today, but this is about "finding the truth"; improving the social situation is not the primary call, yet Evangelion believes the church has an improving role in the society. There will always be places for improvement, he says, underlining the duty of helping, even if the help (for example helping people in the employment market) can only reach a few.

According to Evangelion the church is not the answer for Macedonia, but provides big help. Finding God will have practical consequences, he says. Christian values will help in tensions, the priest explains. He says the society has enough hate, and here the church can do something to help, for example to teach people to love. Evangelion refers to Jesus Christ teaching love for neighbors and enemies, saying this can be used to teach forgiveness and humbleness, tolerance, and much more. This is very important, the respondent says, explaining there are differences in religion, ethnicity and class, which make it important to teach all of these things, especially forgiveness, because there is a very big need. "One cannot teach all nations, but those taught here teach can teach all nations, Jesus said: 'You are salt and light in society,' It is small, but if you want to change not reaching 100% but 2% those can make a big difference, not easy, not fast, but vital." This is valued and stressed by Evangelion, as the role and work of the church.

Evangelion says the Evangelical Church has mostly Macedonian members, some Serbs, some Croats, some Gypsies. Some members have Albanian friends. The neighborhood is Macedonian and the leaders are Macedonian, so the language used is Macedonian. There are strong opinions that a church must be Orthodox, Evangelion says, but positively stating that the Evangelical Church is generally becoming more socially accepted.

The process of new churches appearing in Macedonia was explained by Alex. “Members of churches might view people involved as same or different”, the respondent reflects, and continues by telling that actively Christian people make friends from abroad, belonging to denominations not represented in Macedonia. These will together find a common ground, and the foreigners decide to support for example a local Macedonian youth center or individual leaders. Then they might ask him or her to represent their denomination. Some will then say they do not want their name, explaining that they want independence and to be open for all. But many will leave their churches and build a new one with the name of the people supporting them from abroad. Thus a new church is born. In Macedonia pastors cannot survive on collect, so if they work full time in the ministry they depend on outside help. Alex expresses apologetic affection to his church by stating it stands out by having “all the good things”. He explains this as being well-balanced, not extreme or fundamentalistic, (for example not prohibiting certain clothes or jewelry) or ultraliberal; allowing “everything”. The Evangelical Church supports a modest lifestyle, advising to dress modestly and avoid tobacco use. (I noticed the people attending the services were dressed modestly, not showing much skin). Alex says the Evangelical Church is the biggest of the Protestant churches in Macedonia, and has one branch in every town.

The Evangelical Church is very evangelism-oriented, arranging evangelizing events in order to reach people. Alex states that dogmatically the Evangelical Church is a denomination and movement which teaches differently, each one of the Evangelical churches in Macedonia is independent and has room to move in different directions. Some can sound more Baptist, some have no charisma, some have more charisma for example, it depends on the leaders. “This freedom should not be abused, and pastors here keep an eye on it, they have monthly meetings, where all leaders gather, talk, discuss, and pray.” Alex states, and confirms my impression from my first visit, that until only a handful of years back, all non-Orthodox churches and denominations were considered sects and therefore often frowned upon in Macedonia. Two institutions the Evangelical Church supports are the House of Prayer, Skopje, and Lidija Women Center.

The Faculty of Macedonian Orthodox Theology

A bit longer walk from central Skopje leads to the theological faculty, belonging to the University of St. Cyril and Methody. The campus is a beautiful building in traditional Macedonian

architecture, placed where the street ascends into a steep hillside, in other words a bit up from the road. One must climb some stairs to reach the building. On the same level as the building is also a traditional Orthodox church, placed less than ten meters away. On the west side of the campus the buildings meet steep cliff walls. Next to the church a tiny water stream flows, drips and bounces on the rocks. The water is considered holy, and one can see people coming, bringing bottles to fill with this water. Twice I have been given such water to drink, but it is also used externally. The following information about the faculty is shared by a person working there, Nikola. He is not a cleric, but like Evangelion, Nikola has been associated long enough with the institution to be well aware of the development and current conditions. I will therefore treat the information he has shared as valid.

The subjects and classes are organized by the students being organized into study groups, Nikola explains. Biblical and pastoral subjects are elementary, and are examples of the basis of religious Orthodox theology. Historical law, history of the Orthodox Church, and history subjects including all of Christianity, are subjects the faculty offers. Nikola says Orthodox Christianity is not to be closed off, which is why the faculty offers a study of several relevant fields. The language courses offered are Hebrew, ancient Greece, as well as English, French, German and Russian, but these are not mandatory. Most students are ethnic Macedonians; some belong to the ethnic group called Vlachs. Very few of the ethnic Macedonians come from Bulgaria and Serbia. Without giving any number, most students are male, Nikola continues. In the 90's there were more females, because of prosperity. But there are still female students at the faculty. The graduates can teach in high school, in schools of religion, become priests, teach church courses, or take it further to other scientific areas, or become postgraduates, in the theological faculty or others. They can also engage in humanitarian work. Nikola continues by explaining that the faculty has one student group that is standard for all faculties, it basically takes care of the questions and problems students may have. The faculty collaborates with foreign student organizations associated with the field, on projects about religious collaboration. About half of the teachers are ordained priests, Nikola says.

Since 2009 the faculty has been a member of the State University, a complex set of all universities, Nikola says. Yet the roots are by many people claimed to be deep and old. Nikola explains that the faculty is based on the school of St. Clement of Ohrid, starting in the 10th century, saying that many people draw a continuation between these historical events.

Around the area there are multiple streams, the name of the neighborhood means “dripping water”. Some of the streams are blessed by saints, Nikola explains, saying some people believe, worship and fill bottles with the water. The church on campus has the name of, and is thus dedicated to, John the Baptist. Some students have practical classes there, but overall, Nikola says, the faculty represents, and is, a way of life. The respondent says the students are recommended and encouraged to live that life, attend masses, get into Christianity, and live the Christian life. Nikola continues by saying the students at the faculty have to be baptized into Orthodox Christianity, but people of other religious directions can study there, after special requests are approved. Primary school books are written at the theological faculty. There are co-operations with different scientific fields, according to Nikola excellent co-operations with the Islamic Faculty in Kondolovo, which takes the form of, for example, seminars and professor exchange.

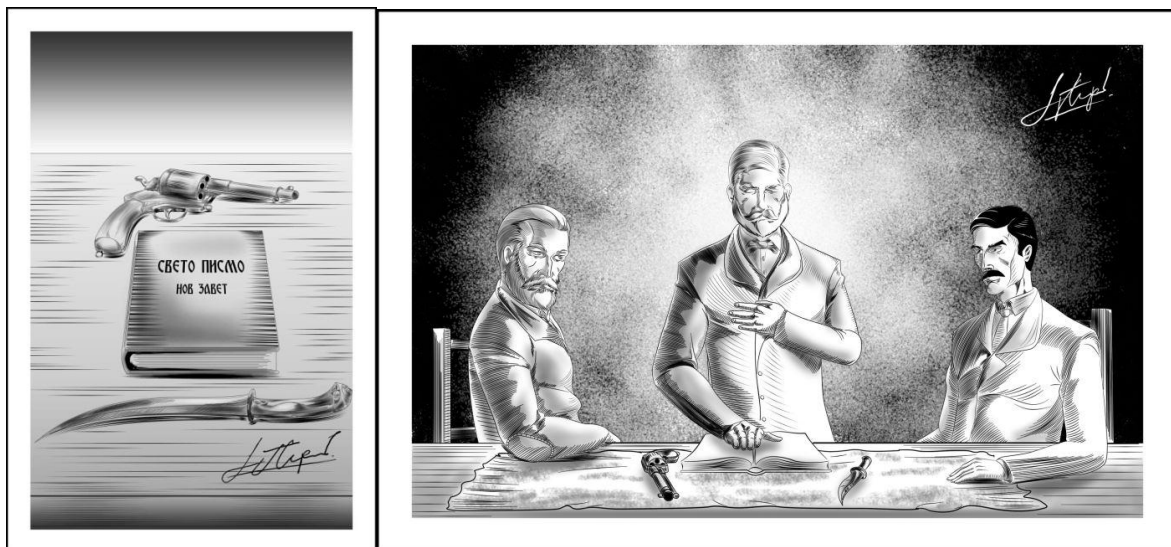
Here I would like to add a few of Nikola's religious interpretation of the faculty and the Macedonian Orthodox Church. These statements will not be treated as facts, but as personal attitudes and thoughts. Later they will be treated as comparative material, along with for example Evangelion's statements about the roles and missions of the Evangelical Church in today's society. First, Nikola happily praises the faculty for providing authentic teaching of Orthodox religion. Religious culture is the basis of society, he states further, claiming the basis of society and culture in all of Europe is written in religion. One example he gives it the Cyrillic alphabet. Nikola soon puts the Biblical figure Paul on the throne as the founder of the Orthodox Church, and claims there is a continuity of church and religion, “undisrupted, evolving, here since then.” Nikola also mentions the development of art, claiming the church of St. Pantelejmon (a richly frescoed church on Vodno) is where the art started expressing feelings in portraits. Nikola gives Christianity credit for the development of law, liberation of women, abolition of slavery, freedom, speech and democracy. He concludes with all of society benefiting for having Orthodox Christianity present and active, and that fruits can be seen everywhere.

The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle

When the tour in the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle starts, one meets a Macedonia under the Ottomans. The Hajduk movement is presented as the first movement trying to minimize the Ottoman Empire, and the Karposh Rebellion in 1689, is presented in wax figures and authentic weapons. Another wax figure one sees in the first room is Sirma Vojvoda, also called Rumena

Vojvoda. She is presented Macedonia's Joan of Arc, a leader for 23 years, covered as a man. Two other wax sculptures portray the reformists Abdul Mecit and Abdul Azig. These were working for the rights for the countries under the Ottomans, no matter religion or nationality. They helped Macedonia get the right to build churches, despite these having to be smaller than mosques. Distinguishing between Macedonians and the other Balkan cultures and lands was very important, the tour guide says.

The museum tour shows a figure of William Gladstone, who is famous for the quote "Macedonia to the Macedonians". In the same room revolutionary figures like names like Stojan (responsible for weapons), Berovski, Razlevak are shown. It and it is made clear that the goal was an autonomous state of Macedonia. A shield with a lion symbol is shown, which information texts as well as the guide explains, is the symbol of the revolutionary movement. The two tails of the lion are symbolizing one for the church, and one for the state. A knife, Bible and gun together (exhibited in the museum) were another symbol, and part of the initiation of new members of the revolutionary movement. The initiation included swearing oaths with the hands on these.



The knife, gun and bible from the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, and the initiation ritual which used these items. Illustrations by Dimitar Gjorgiev

When the museum tour chronology has reached year 1871, a congress is held in Bismarck is presented. It pronounced Macedonia as entitled to independence, "but this statement never got imposed", the guide says. In the early twentieth century Greek propaganda took place in Macedonia, is told as the tour continues. The museum shows books in Greek, based on the statement that the church and school were frequently subjected to such "linguistic propaganda." One reaction was that poems got translated from Greek to Ohrid dialect, which was the first

codifier of standard Macedonian language. The museum exhibits old dictionaries, in Macedonian, Turkish and Albanian language.

The tour reaches 1908. Young Turkish rebels who wanted changes; democracy while maintaining the Ottoman Empire, are presented. So is Macedonia getting legal political parties. National Federal Party came as one of these. King Franz Joseph and the Russian Tsar (presented in a painting) allowed Slavs some self-rule, which did not last long. The First Balkan war was to eject the Ottomans, the guide tells. A map is exhibited, as an illustration of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro negotiation about how to divide the territory called Macedonia, "while Macedonia was fighting for independence". The Second Balkan war was the same year. The museum shows statistics of 700 000 declaring themselves Macedonian, and after the Greek civil war, 400 000.

The museum presents the cherry cannon (illustrated with a large painting of the work process of building the cannon), which became an ideological symbol. In the same room a replica of a gallows with a hanged man is shown, which, according to the guide, had the purpose of embarrassing and frightening. Self-sacrifices were characteristic for the revolutionary movement. Next room shows, in a painting, Greek soldiers killing civilians, "showing no mercy." Another illustration of this is the exhibited book *Au Pays des Martyrs*, by Alfred Rappaport, which was written about these atrocities. "The demographical status in the area of Macedonia was changed, because murder proved ineffective," the guide says, stating "it could be done in a diplomatic way, cultural genocide by change of names, and mass deportations; 300 000 Macedonians deported from the Aegean area."

During the presence of the Krushevo Republic, everyone was called Macedonian or Albanian, and told to stand up against the Ottomans. The last room in the museum presents the victims of the freedom fight. The repression was finished in 1991, information boards and the guide explain. Some commonly shared words about the last fight are as follows; "necessary so that everyone can say he's Macedonian." The declaration of independence from Yugoslavia was in 1991. This is mentioned when the tour in the museum reaches its end. The Vergina Sun is now interpreted as asking for freedom. The museum has an ornament of the Vergina Sun in the floor.

To start discussing the tour and the exhibited artifacts in the museum, I find that overall religion is not given much profound attention. The Bible being one of the requisites in the initiation of

new members in the revolutionary movement, the two-tailed lion, and the church being a passive institution subjected to propaganda, as well as a Jewish member and Muslim people portrayed as wax figures, the importance of religion is reduced to. I get the feeling of reading a history book from my time as a history student; religious institutions and dogmas being mentioned only when considered necessary. Is the museum no typical example of Binns theories about the importance of Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the development of nationalism and national liberation in the Balkans? Is it an exception, or should it be approached as a scientific anomaly? Among the wax statues there are figures portraits of people representing Muslim and Jewish religion, one woman, the Catholic emperor Francis Joseph I, and the Russian Orthodox Tsar. This religious and ethnic heterogeneity provide a different image than what is offered by the Skopje 2014-statues, especially at the main square, where all the represented figures are male Macedonians. Does this variety indicate the museum as an unsuited example of Holm's theories about idealizations of those belonging to oneself? The museum offers an uncritical presentation of the heroes, which might serve as a good example of idealization, which Holm says, is a common human feature.⁹⁶ The heroes are idealized, along with those who contributed in what can be understood as the “Macedonian struggle.”

Interviews about Macedonia Today

Which questions does a field working student ask to understand the ethnic and religious situation in Macedonia today, is the question I would like to begin with. First I wondered who – which people, which means which ethnic group and of which religion – are socially given the right of identifying with Macedonian culture. Several respondents, from both churches, answered this question. Different members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church gave different answers, some said “anyone”, one “anyone living here”, without mentioning any time frame for how long the person would have to live in Macedonia to claim the right. “All who feel like Macedonians” Milo answered, explaining that his use of the term “Macedonians” did not mean the Slavic ethnic group. Milo meant all people who feel like inhabitants of the country Macedonia have the right to identify with the history and culture.

Members of the Evangelical Church answered somehow a little differently. Ivana said everyone who is born in Macedonia or has lived there for long can identify with the history, while anyone can identify with the traditions. She said history will not mean anything for people who lack the

⁹⁶ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 127

strong ties one gets from being born in a place or having lived there for long. Alexander also makes conditions, but of different sort. He says “Everyone; those born here, all who love the country, and all who feel home here”.

None of the stated conditions involve religion or ethnicity, is my interpretation of these answers. Being Christian is not a condition for the right to identify with the culture of history, according to these people. Neither is Macedonian or Slavic ethnicity. Milo's statement about “feeling Macedonian” let the conditions be emotional. Alexander too does this, as two alternatives to the first condition he mentions; being born in Macedonia. Ivana's separation between history and culture gives the impression that the attitudes to this, in the Evangelical Church, are more complicated and defined than those in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The technical conditions, of being born in Macedonia and having lived there for a long time differentiates from the emotional conditions members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. But overall the conditions seem mostly directed to foreigners, people who are not born in the country. The conditions including affectionate feelings for Macedonia, mentioned by Alexander, can make one wonder whether he can mean that people who are born in Macedonia but lack affection for the country or nation are not entitled to the right of identifying with the culture. Are there people who do so?

Eric calls the Albanian population a second majority, and considers Macedonia a small country with smaller countries inside. This works, according to Eric, as a car with a broken engine, and two different nets trying to catch the same fish. One problem is the world view. The Albanian nation here in Macedonia is a shadow of the Middle East. While Macedonians are more open to the West, Albanians are more open to the East. This transforms into actions. Eric continues by using the metaphor of a divided river, thus Macedonia floats a different way than Albania. This is very difficult, Eric says, finding a little discrimination involved. “One conflict is followed by revenging, Eric continues, telling a story about a young Albanian man bragging about winning a fight against a Macedonian. *“If you fight, your child will fight too”*, Eric said to this man. The respondent thinks the fighting needs to end, that people have to stop taking things too personally, stop having an “us and them”-relationship, which includes the feeling that *“they* have something against *us”*. Violence happening between people of different ethnic backgrounds is often followed by revenging, Eric explains, saying this makes a treat to all people of the ethnic groups involved. The revenge-mentality is stronger among Albanian Muslims, Eric says. But from what I have read and heard about the consequences of the homicide mentioned in the beginning of this

chapter, it is clear the revenge-mentality is present – and strong – among both ethnic groups. Contacts in Skopje confirmed that the public demonstrations mass media reported took place, as well as violence against civil Albanians, which can be considered indications of mutual revenge-mentality. Which religion or ethnic group has the *strongest* revenge-mentality is not a question I intend to approach. Eric says many Albanians claim the country Albania 100 years ago, and not Macedonia. Some even claim that the country has no history. What Eric likes about the Albanian culture is their hospitality, the Albanians are described as very generous. Eric carries on by praising Macedonia for the beauty of multi-culture.

Anne, the other marginal person, also works with Albanians, and said the heterogeneous situation in Macedonia is quite difficult, with Albanians telling their sides of the situation, and Macedonians telling theirs. Anne finds it important not to choose side. She finds the situation tensed, and sometimes fears for her own safety. Nationalism increases hatred, Anne says, but considers religion as the main reason for war and conflict. Anne says people generally tie ethnicity to religion; “Being Macedonian here includes being Christian, and being Albanian includes being Muslim.” Many Muslims think all Christians are Orthodox, she continues, and believes most Christians are unaware of the different traditions within Islam, like Shia, Sunni and Sufi. Many Albanians talk negatively about the nation Macedonia, Anne continues, explaining that some consider Macedonia a part of Albania once. The claim includes Albanians settling at the place before. Some also say Alexander the Great was Illyrian. According to Anne's and Eric's statements, there are people who lack affectionate bonds to the nation Macedonia. Anne criticizes nationalism for increasing hatred by favoring Macedonians. Nationalism claims the land, claims leadership, and legitimizes appeals to power. Thus it prevents peace, she concludes. These reflections can be seen as examples of the self-asserting Mønnesland mentions in the negative face of nationalism,⁹⁷ and it shows another side of a potential negative side of nationalism. One recognizes the claim to power, and the claim of singularly possessing the country. Anne says the cross on Vodno denying Albanians the right to belong there. This shows another negative part of the negative side of nationalism: denying others the right to identify with a place. It also shows how a religious symbol can be interpreted personally and with negative content against oneself and one's group.

Nenad describes his trustful, respectful friendships with Albanian Muslims, and says ethnicity feels far away to him. Nenad believes in theories of conspiracy, “two argue, one third takes

⁹⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 22

advantage.” Nenad takes distance from what the ministry of interior said, that the situation in today's Macedonia is a matter of Muslims against Christians. Another example of unproblematic co-existence between Christians and Muslims in today's Macedonia is said by Ivana, who has friends of Muslim and non-Macedonian background. She says the presence of Muslims in Macedonia do not make it difficult to be a Christian, because only 25% of the population are Muslims. It is harder to be an Evangelical Christian among Macedonian Orthodox than among Muslims, she says. Members of both churches have said they associate the history in Macedonia with people of different ethnicity. Among these are Alex and Milo, who say they associate the history with hard-working farmers and “heroes” from the resistance against the Ottomans. These people they imagine are Macedonian, Albanian, Vlasi and more. “Their connection to Macedonia is on a cultural basis,” Milo says. It is clear the blood line is not important in the matter of social integration in Macedonia today, it is a question about cultures. According to Anne and Eric Macedonia hosts different cultures, connected to ethnicity and religion. The statements about friendships across the ethnic groups indicate the society not being as divided as Anne and Eric say. I do not dare to say what is the norm and what is the exception; an integrated society where tensions are the exception, or a divided society where friendship across boundaries are the exceptions? Different data point in different directions. Different data point at different attitudes to the role of religion in this, we have seen co-operation between Christian and Muslim institutions, as well as religions being accused of causing conflicts. But much data seems to point at the tying of religion and ethnicity; the common social Macedonian ethnicity including belonging to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and Albanian ethnicity including belonging to Islam. This attitude I would like to characterize as a norm in today's Macedonia, as well as letting the Evangelical Church indicate exceptions.

Ethnic Tensions in Mass Media

“Ethnic tensions have resurfaced in Macedonia following the announcement of the murder of the five men on the outskirts of the capital, Skopje. The killings have aggravated relations between Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian minority.” April 12th 2012 five men (four around 20, one in his 40's) were shot dead outside Skopje. All of the victims were reportedly ethnic Macedonians. Groups of Macedonians blocked several streets in the area the same day, and police were deployed to prevent violent clashes. Mass media and several individuals I talked to expressed

worries the murders could indicate, or lead to, worsening relations between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. In March the same year several people were injured and scores arrested when young people, both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, attacked buses and each other using knives, iron bars, and baseball bats.⁹⁸

“Macedonian police intervened on Monday to stop a mob mainly composed of youngsters and hooligans from moving across the Vardar river (Skopje) towards an area mainly populated by ethnic Albanians.” Frequent rumors said the murder of the five men was caused by ethnic Albanians, despite the police repeatedly said there were no such evidence. The protesters shouted abusive slogans against Albanians in front of the government building, and threw stones and bricks at the police. The weekend before one Albanian house was burned down by Macedonian mobs. The previous Friday, hundreds of Macedonians gathered near the place where the bodies were found, demanding that the killers be brought to justice. “Tension between the two communities has been rising since February when an off-duty Macedonian policeman shot dead two young Albanians in the northwestern town of Gostivar.” Macedonia experienced inter-ethnic gang violence after thins, which Balkan Insight considers the worst since the rebellion in 2001.⁹⁹

Volku, a politics scholar, explains one has to be 18 to be an adult in Macedonia, and the police is not allowed to physically touch under aged. Mobs attack people of different ethnicities, which becomes problematic since the police are not allowed in interfere. Volku says the core problem is unstrict child upbringing, loose rules in schools where neither teachers nor security guards are allowed to touch students or tell them to leave classrooms. This, he says, can be seen in lack of respect for authorities among high schools students. The problem, Volku says, is to be found among people in this age, of Macedonian, Albanian and Roma background. Many of the troublemakers are football mobs, Volku continues, saying that in the past violence was associated with these. Now this has changed, and politicians use these mobs to do their “dirty work,” offering them privileges in return. The reliability I attach to Volku's words is based not only on his education, but also in deep practical knowledge about the security situation in Macedonia today. Volku's statements offer explanations to the tensions in today's Macedonia, how there can be friendships and integrations as well as violence and tensions. The interview answers presented in this chapter show different sides of the social situation, and I personally think Anne gave a useful solution when talking about choosing sides, as well as Nenad and Alex when talking about avoiding categorizing people into religious or ethnic groups. The mobs of underage males are

⁹⁸ Sterling, “Murders Have Macedonia Nervous“

⁹⁹ Duridanski, “Macedonia Police Halt Attack on Albanians”

guilty of violence against members of other groups. When people of the groups exposed to this generalize and associate the violence with all people of the group the mob belongs to, dislike and fear occur. This leads to divisions. And there are people who generalize, and people who do not.

Nils G. Holm seems to say that regarding “others” as evil, and oneself and the group one identifies with as good, is normal. When receiving news about war, disasters and other happenings that can be characterized as evil, Holm explains, the result can be to make a split between what people experience as “our” safe culture and the evil, threatening culture of “others”.¹⁰⁰ Holm adds that groups might start regarding other individuals or certain other groups as expressions of the evil. By attaching symbols of what is considered evil to these, it can, unfortunately, justify mass murder and war, when the possibilities for conversations are gone. These symbols help people understand who to hate and who to work with.¹⁰¹ Holm says nothing about the process or conditions for this happening, making it seem so simple, like news about potentially “evil” happenings are enough. Holm continues by explaining that removing these negative symbols is extremely difficult.¹⁰² I disagree, having grown up in a narrow-minded village, and numerous times experienced prejudices and fear of foreigners disappear. But to Holm’s theory does offer support to the use of Volku’s words about the under-aged mobs as one explanation to the ethnic-religious division in Macedonia today.

Talking about Mass Media

How much do people in Macedonia trust mass media? Milo says mass media places Macedonians among the most religious people on the Balkans. He disagrees, saying it is a problem that many people don't separate between religion and nationality/ethnicity. Many people, he says, find it politically correct to be religious. Mass media has big influence, maybe too much, answers Milo, The respondent chooses not to pay much attention to mass media, finding it politically orientated. His first reaction when hearing about ethnically loaded conflicts, is anger, at the political leader he says caused it.

Mass media (online magazines, newspapers and books) presents today's Macedonia with deep divisions and dislike between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. I asked several respondents

¹⁰⁰ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 127

¹⁰¹ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 129

¹⁰² Ibid, 129

about their attitudes to mass media, including the reliability and social responsibility they attach to this. Alex, said mass media overall shows tolerance and respect, but must stop mentioning ethnicity when reporting crimes. It divides people into groups, Alex said, stating that “criminals are criminals, no matter background.” Mass media is criticized for increasing tensions, and the political orientations are negatively mentioned. So are limits and sources of errors. None is trusting mass media without profound consideration.

Talking about homogeneity. Who wishes it?

“I can't imagine how Macedonia would be if it was totally Christian,” Milo says, and goes on by talking about contact between neighbors of different backgrounds. He refers to a deep conversation with an Albanian Muslim friend. Ivana, Alexander and Adrian from the Evangelical Church also tell about good friendships with people of all ethnic groups in Macedonia. “No Muslims in Macedonia would be impossible,” Nenad responds. Christian homogeneity in Macedonian could only be achieved with ethnic wars, he insists. “I don't like judging on the basis of religion, homogeneity would not be good, the Muslims have been her for 200 years, and I don't want them to leave their homes and go somewhere else.” Elena's statement may point in a different direction. She said that if Macedonia was only Christian there would be no conflicts. But this does, first of all, not say that Elena sees no other solution to conflicts. It is also important to point out that the Evangelical Church believes in missioning, which Nenad does not.

“There are no problems”, Mihajlo from the theological faculty says, “only leaders abusing power.” Mihajlo is positive to diversity, and said he respects a Muslim who approaches his faith seriously. I would like to put this into context with Elena's words about *jihad*, that the society has a moral responsibility to protect against jihad, but must be equally aware of the atrocities happening under Christianity. According to these statements the good and bad in these two religions is underlined, and the moral responsibility to avoid negative consequences of religious practice is set equal. It also seems, if one looks at these two statements only, that the given responsibilities differ from the two different churches. Elena, from the Evangelical Church, mentions the moral responsibility, while Mihajlo, from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, mentions the spiritual approach to the religion. “I see if a person is good or bad, for example a good Muslim and a bad Christian. It is a matter of approach: if a Muslim is approaching his faith seriously then I respect it.” One could think that the Macedonian Orthodox Church values the spiritual responsibility, while the Evangelical Church

values moral responsibility. But by saying there are no problems with the diversity, moral credit is shared equally. And terms like “good Christian” and “good Muslim” do often include moral. One can therefore conclude the moral is to be found in the statement from the associate with the Theological Faculty as well as from the active member of the Evangelical Church.

This discussion has presented all the data my field work has given that can be put into context with ideals about ethnic homogeneity, but they either show a lack of this wish among my respondents, or pointing only vaguely or indirectly to such ideals. Elena's statement about conflicts is an example of this. The birth rates in Christian families are lower than in Muslim families in Macedonia.¹⁰³ This is mentioned with concern by both Nenad and Ivana. They are worried Muslims might outnumber Christians. “Christian culture is unfortunately going down,” Nenad says. I do not know whether it is right to say they fear a Muslim majority, but it seems like what people fear is a Christian minority. I have not found any concerns for a falling number of ethnic Macedonians. The concerns for the low birth rate is not about ethnicity, it is about religion. No one has ever said, as I have heard or read: “we'll be an Albanian country if it goes on like this!” instead it was stated “we'll be a Muslim country if we go on like this!” Muslims who convert are counted as Christians. Albanian children adopted by Macedonian parents are counted as Christians. Ethnic blood lines are not important here.

Talking about Christianity in Macedonia Today

Marta, from the Orthodox majority says Christianity in Macedonia today is too political, doing much of their actions for gaining power and commercial interests. The church thus lacks idealistic goals, she concludes. Manev says he loves the Church, God and Jesus, but not the priests, because of their commercial interests. He idealizes the previous century, claiming it was different then. These two members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church criticized their church's priests for being too commercial and spending the money on luxury, because of high charges for their liturgical services. Nenad claimed he would have to work for 24 hours to make as much money as priests would charge for a wedding ritual, which takes 40 to 60 minutes. Like Manev, he claims this is a modern phenomenon, but Nenad says that in the old days the money given to the church was used to feed the poor, and then the amount was voluntary. I have heard this from others too, and have seen and felt the belief in “witchcraft” still existing in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Many priests offer the service of exorcizing evil powers from housings (never people) at a price, and critics say some

¹⁰³ Marusic, “Macedonian Conservatives March for ‘Family Values’”

priests encourage this belief for the sake of commercial gain. A happening before Orthodox Easter 2012, when frescoes were said to clean themselves. This kind of critics against the clerics of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was, to all my attention, mentioned only by members of this church. I have never encountered this critic from members of other religious directions. But members of the Evangelical Church have criticized the Macedonian Orthodox Church for lacking *vera*, and failing in leading people to God.

Mirek & Mihail, two students at the theological faculty said the Church on Earth bears its weakness and imperfections. The respondents claim Christianity all over the world is imperfect, including Macedonia. The perfection comes from Jesus. "A problem is that people are more religious than spiritual, but the Macedonian Church is no less spiritual than any other Church." A respondent I call Markus, also a theology student, says the exact same thing. Fading values and falling interest in the faith is present in all Christianity, he said, setting the existence of conflicts as an indication of lacking Christianity. Milo's negative statement about people lacking knowledge, finding it politically correct to be religious and tying nationality, can also be placed here, among the attitudes of his school mates.

At the Evangelical Church Elena said most Orthodox Christians are engaged in *religija* but not *vera*, saying "I pray more people will become Christians." Anne said Christianity in Macedonia needs more work, stating that people need to live like "real Christians", and she does not think the Orthodox majority does. The Evangelical Church needs to work more with the Orthodox Church, Anne thinks. Alex said the majority lack knowledge about God or the Bible. The respondent says this is why many people keep traditions taught by parents, not agreeing to change that, even if, according to Alex, the Bible requires changes. "I think it's slowly changing, people are becoming more open to God and what according to the Bible means to be a Christian lifestyle. I hope it continues this way, not just remains old way, but that it becomes a true understanding of God's will and God's desire for us. It will lead to complete faith."

Anne's and Alex' statements show an attitude that the members of the Evangelical Church has stronger *vera* than the members of the Macedonian Orthodox majority. Both find it necessary to change this, and believe in the Evangelical Church as a variable to promote positive changes. But overall both churches set a need for more Christian culture as a reason for concern. Both churches share optimism about growing numbers people with *vera*. Fading values are set as an indication of lack of *vera*. This shows a remaining belief in Christianity as a good religion, which can result in good people and a good society. Elena and Mihajlo make statements about negative actions in the name of Christianity, but it seems like this does not change the view of the positive effect of the

religion. It only provides a new responsibility to avoid negative effects, approach one's religion seriously, and be a good believer and participant, no matter if the religion is Christianity or Islam. Statements by different people indicate both churches hosting attitudes that agree things must change, and *vera* as well as *religija* must be maintained, if not increased.

The statement by Mirek & Mihail, about incompleteness of all Christianity being a part of the incompleteness of the world, is the only answer that does not express hope of change or progress. It might have been said as a defense. I do not know how people in Macedonia actually see me as a master student doing research, and it is completely natural to have assumptions about what a researching foreigner is expecting or personally thinking about one's country. The respondents might have thought I had negative attitudes. Another interpretation is that the word “complete”, which they used, is the same as “perfect”. The Macedonian words for this are quite similar, they have three consonants in common. I will later use the belief in an imperfect church on Earth in a model to explain the way one can see nation and religion together in Macedonia.

People not distinguishing between religion and nationality or ethnicity is mentioned as a problem, and the political correctness of calling oneself religious was mentioned as a source of errors.

A member of the Evangelical Church says deep knowledge is lacking. Religion, in the most limited meaning of the word *religija*, seen as an obstacle. Orthodox Christians are not living like real Christians, say critics from a member of the Evangelical Church. The terminologies *vera* and *religija* can explain this, that the member means people in the Macedonian Orthodox Church have *religija* but not *vera*, and *religija* being incomplete without *vera* to live as a “real Christian”. This can be added to the quote that the presence of *religija* prevents people from being submerged into *vera*.

Slow changes, in the forms of increasing numbers of people embracing *vera*, are also here optimistically mentioned by both churches. This optimism might be caused by a belief that God wishes such changes, and has the power to make it happen. Eric said it is up to God to choose those suited to become missionaries, and lead them in the acts.

Talking about Mixed Marriages

Marriages between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds are rare, but not unfamiliar to the people I interviewed. What are the attitudes to mixed marriages in today's Macedonia? In this country with mixed ethnicity and strong ethnic identity and conscience, are there interests and values in preserving the ethnic blood lines? This question was asked to different members of both churches

during the field work. The first two are from the Evangelical Church, the first answers are by Evangelion. He claims to know very few such marriages. Usually the woman is Macedonian and the man Albanian. "There are no such things as different races here," Evangelion says. "If a man wants to marry a Roma girl, it is OK if she is a believer. Macedonian, Serb or Croat, there are no counting differences (between these different Slavic groups). But when it comes to these and Albanians, Bosnians and Turks, the difference is bigger." Evangelion mentions a female member married to a Bosnian Muslim. She is still attending the Evangelical Church. I asked the respondent how the reaction would be if worried parents would come and say their child wants to marry someone of a different ethnic group. "Do the best for them, one cannot change them!" was the answer. Evangelion says the mother in law is a reason for consideration, finding many Muslim women dominant. Another obstacle was the parents' expectations to their children. Evangelion mentions the possibility of an identity crisis. I find that interesting, because it shows high importance of religion in the mental landscape of identity.

Alex responded to the question that as long as nothing forceful or illegal is going on, and both spouses agree, there is no problem with it. Alex mentions the saying "if you marry an Albanian girl, she will serve you well", about Albanian women being domestic, obedient and caring. It is known to him that some middle-aged men find wives in Albania, among Albanian females wishing to escape life in poor villages. According to Alex most Christians agree about his approval of ethnically mixed marriages. But the worries and concerns are different from person to person, he says. Alexander also mentioned problems with marriages between Orthodox men and Protestant women.

Since Milo has a background in theological studies, I asked him whether he would perform marriage rituals to couples of different ethnicities. He first asked whether I meant different ethnic groups or different religions, then stating Orthodox and Catholic are possible, but Protestant is more critical. In Macedonia the differences are more connected to religion than to ethnicity, he explains. The conditions for a couple of different religions is that the Muslim be willing to convert.

Parents worried about children getting married to spouses of other ethnic groups, have contacted Milo. But to him the parents' opinions did not matter. The decision belongs to those who are getting married, and to Milo the couple having the same religion matters, and that they raise their children in this religion.

Nenad said shortly that love will happen no matter what, color, race or culture. A culture that judges from religion must change, the respondent meant, and said it can change with parents teaching their

young not to take measures. Nenad is the only one I asked who did not mention conditions - like converting – or raise concerns about the phenomena of ethnically mixed marriages. I also talked to a person with mixed roots. Martha has parents from two different Slavic ethnicities. She claimed the ethnicity follows the father's line.

Ivana is the respondent raising most concerns about mixed marriages is from the Evangelical Church. She says as follows: "It's her choice, her pro's and con's, if different religions it will be hard, because of all the problems with the 2001 conflict. Still, it is her decision, one cannot make her choose Evangelical and Orthodox, but there will be time when he will make her choose; Church on Sunday, or spend time with him on Sunday, he will want her to compromise, and maybe even give her an ultimatum." It was stated that if Muslim and Christian get married there will be problems, for example dilemmas about which holidays to celebrate. Ivana has experienced parents dis-accepting her engagements between their Protestant daughters her and a Macedonian Orthodox man. Ivana disagrees with Marta's statement that the ethnicity of children follows the father's line, she said it depends on upbringing.

Several of the answers stated that the choice is up to the individuals on who they choose to marry. The concerns regarding mixed marriages are related to culture and religion, not to ethnicity or blood lines. I found no concern for maintaining pure blood lines admitted by the respondents, but Milo says he has met parents with that concern. Does this mean the value is limited to the older generation? One cannot tell whether there is respect or understanding for the event of worried parents asking for help with children marrying outside the ethnic group. But none of the asked respondents were willing to try talking the bride or groom out of the plan. And actually both Alexander and Milo said they would not try to persuade their own family members otherwise had these decided to marry spouses of other ethnic backgrounds. From this one could understand a lack of wishes to preserve the ethnic blood line, when it comes to their own families and others'. The value is in child upbringing, and happiness for the married couples (no doubt the respondents are caring people).

The impression given by the press is that mixed marriages between Macedonians and Albanians are not at all socially accepted. The interviews show a different picture, there are concerns raised about the practical situation for this man and women who decide to commit to life partners of different ethnic groups, and even of different religions. How come mass media gives a different picture? Have I, without knowing, been talking to people representing the exceptions? Or is mass media presenting a simplified picture of what Milo and Evangelion say, that conversion is a condition? If so, the mass

media is wrong, saying marriages between Macedonians and Albanians are unacceptable, but right in saying marriages between Christians and Muslims are unacceptable.

Discussing Macedonia Today

To the tensed situation in Macedonia, it is possible to find explanations in what Holm says about symbols of evil being attached to others, while symbols of good being attached to oneself and the group one identifies with.¹⁰⁴ But according to the answers I have gathered, this is not the case in the questions about mixed marriages. It is not about regarding others as negative, less moralistic or evil, it is about the happiness of the married couple and their children. Continuity with the past is frequently used in establishing a national and religious identity on the Balkans. But preserving blood lines of ethnic groups is, to the church members I talked to, not a part of this.

Let me continue by discussing the tensions in the society of today's Macedonia. Mihajlo said there are no conflicts, only leaders abusing power. We have also seen a politics scholar, and mass media, talk about political parties supporting football hooligans who cause insecurity in the streets and anger negative feelings towards members of other ethnic groups. We can add to this the prohibition to celebrate the Albanian Flag Day.¹⁰⁵ Mihajlo's statement can be well-founded, explained and understood. It is also positive, because it shows trust in Macedonian traditions, as in people, that these are capable of good co-existence across differences. This chapter has used three months of field work to introduce and discuss the situation in Macedonian today, considering religion, national attitudes and ethnicity. Not to mention, the chapter has put the collected data up against the image mass media has given. Themes like attitudes to Christianity in Macedonia today has presented people's thoughts about the standard, conditions for and importance of Christianity, as well as contributed to a deeper understanding of the terms *religija* and *vera*. Themes like mixed marriages, statistics and birth rates gave increased understanding of when ethnicity is the matter, and when religion is. Religion showed to be crucial in more than one matter. The chapter has also introduced the two religious institutions the research has focused on, each introduction followed by shared thoughts and attitudes from believing, highly active members. Despite the fact that many readers have never seen the buildings, sat in the offices or classrooms, or met the research participants or church members, I hope to have given a decent introduction of matters of importance.

¹⁰⁴ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 129

¹⁰⁵ Marusic "Macedonia Disappoints Albanians on Flag Celebration"

Continuity with the past

A new day breaks at the central square in Skopje. The sky is pale blue, and one hears soft drumming of high rubber heels on the asphalt ground. From further away one hears cars, and from a big screen on the south side of the square one will soon hear advertisement music. Something else that catches one's ear is the sound of splashing, soon to be replaced with tranquil swish. Following the sound the eyes will be aware of a 24 meters tall statue of Alexander on his horse, never named Alexander but I have never noticed traces of doubt it is him, a classically formed but new monument. It is undoubtedly the most noticeable among the Skopje 2014-artifacts, which includes 30 buildings and monuments.¹⁰⁶ Alexander enjoys the company of Tsar Samoil, Emperor Justinian (both with crosses) Metodija Andonov-Cento (first president after World War II) and soon an Orthodox church. The square is barely recognizable compared to six years ago. Then the most important meeting spot was the stone bridge over the river Vardar, which splits the city in one Macedonian and one Albanian side. If one looks in the direction of the bridge, one sees buildings in ancient architecture. Some are not yet finished. One also sees one old church, and further away, mosques. A little to the north one sees an old fort, looking down on the square and the river. If one turns in the opposite direction, west, one sees the mountain Vodno, standing like the roof of the city, with a cross on the top. The cross is called The Millennium Cross, meant to mark 2000 years of Christianity, and is illuminated during the night. If one turns and looks to the south, one sees a white triumph arch, also with ancient architecture, and also new. It has figures representing the history of Macedonia, from the ancient time to World War II. Walking in that direction, and a little past the arch, one sees a small park, where a number of new monuments are built. In another part of the city, called Aerodrome, there is now a small park with new monuments, fountains, and the smallest Orthodox Church I have ever seen.

Skopje 2014 is not the only presentation of ancient symbols in Macedonia today. Some bank notes (10 denari, ironically enough a monetary used in the Bible) are decorated with peacocks in ancient mosaics. This peacock is also shown in TV adverts, on wine bottles, and the monastery St. Naum Ohridski, the peacocks and peahens are walking around freely. It is possible to see this animal as a national symbol. It is also possible to see it as continuity with the past, since it is associated with the ancient mosaic. The peacock symbol is adopted by the monastery, and Volku said the bird has been

¹⁰⁶ Stojanchevska and Nikodinovska, "Secret Contracts Hide Cost of Skopje Makeover"

in the monastery for long, remembering primary school excursions to the place, how they as children amused themselves by chasing the peacocks.

After this vignette of a few visual examples of consciously used symbols of continuity with ancient past, the chapter will continue by discussing two theories, by Holm and Mønnesland, which can be found relevant. This will be followed by a reflection on the debate about the origin of today's Macedonians; whether or not they are descending from the people inhabiting the area in ancient times. My thesis is not intending to end the debate or search answers to the question, but instead ask why importance is attached to it. I intend to start by introducing the debate, and compare the data from interview answers. After this the chapter will continue by discussing the meaning and attitudes attached to Macedonia being mentioned in the Bible. The comparing and discussing of data will continue here. This will also carry on under the next headline, which approaches the naming of Macedonia as “the Cradle of Civilizations”. The next headline will bring up a theme which is discussed by respondents from the Macedonian Orthodox Church; the terminology of the Macedonian name for Orthodox: Pravoslavna. Literally the term means “first believing”, and I intend to look for claims of the Orthodox Church representing an uninterrupted continuity. The last headline will sum up and discuss the whole chapter, by asking for the reason of “all of this.” Which continuity will the chapter focus on? The main focus will be on the symbols of continuity with ancient time.

Two Theories

Svein Mønnesland writes, in his book *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, that national rebirth includes thoughts that the nation once was big, and this needs to be re-risen. It becomes important to show to previous, geographic out stretching and deep roots in the area, this making the ethnography of the nation a popular scientific field.¹⁰⁷ Mønnesland is not explaining what he means with “national rebirth,” he is only offering fragments of a functional definition. Also, the writes is not explaining other consequences of this importance other than ethnography becoming a popular scientific field. The mentioned book is written before summer 2011, when the first Skopje 2014-constructions started taking place. But peacocks were already walking around in St. Sveti Naum, and one saw them as antique mosaics decorating the 10 denari notes, among other visual symbols of continuity with ancient past. The Macedonian flag, for example, uses the Verginia Sun, which resembles the symbol found in many archeological artifacts. I must also state that Mønnesland is not explaining why it

¹⁰⁷ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 24

becomes important to think of the nation as big, or prove the listed qualities of the roots in the area. But his theory expresses the phenomena of symbols of continuity with the past today, puts words – even if shallow ones – on the interest of symbols of continuity with the past.

Nils G. Holm writes that the individuals identify themselves with the good, using history, myths and hero legends to create symbols for it. This will strengthen the self-feeling, and encourage self-sacrifices. On a nationalistic base these are often appearing in social context, and including historical perspectives, where unright has happened. The symbols will then be factors creating order,¹⁰⁸ helping people understand who to hate and who to work with. Holm writes that idealizing something is a commonly human feature. He uses one of many theories to explain why, that the small individual becomes part of something greater through idolization; the individual thus makes itself greater. In another theory, Holm underlines the identification with the group, saying the individual can feel home in a greater context often led by someone valued. Young people are often the practicing this.¹⁰⁹ Before mentioning the nationalistic base, it is not clear whether Holm's theory about the first mentioned identification with the good is only valid for individuals. Holm does not make it clear what he means. The consequences he mentions, like self-sacrifices, can serve the group but not necessarily the individual, while strong self-feelings serve all. Holm says the symbols, by informing who to hate and who to cooperate with, serve to create order. I would like to ask how it creates order when people learn to work with some and hate some. That sounds like seeds for a society of discrimination and segregation, which people might understand as a form for order. It might also, in the context of continuity with the past, be understood as symbols from one's own past being used to legitimate one group's claim to a certain area, and illegitimize the claim of others. Holm does not make clear that he sometimes describes the thoughts of the research object, and sometimes the deep-psychological analysis. Neither does he distinct between these in the book's explanations of his theories. But, on the positive side, Holm's theory can provide understandings of the situation in Macedonia, with idealization of hero figures of one's own ethnic group or religion.

The chapter started with two theories that mentioned deep roots in the area, and identification with and idealization of figures from history. Together these theories can give an understanding of the interest – maybe even need – for symbols of continuity with the past in Macedonia today. Both theories are together capable of explaining fundamentals of the use of continuity with the past today.

¹⁰⁸ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 128

¹⁰⁹ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 147

The debate about the origin of today's Macedonians is found many places in mass media, especially on the internet. YouTube as well as online magazines show argumentation filled with emotions and temper, from exchange of insults to giving everyone the right to state their names.

"In the 700's, Slavic people came here," Smith, the historian I interviewed, says. Mihajlo says that there is a tradition with ancient Macedonians and Slavic Macedonians, but this is not a matter of pure nation, because, he states, Macedonia is not pure. The people in the country have been mixed biologically with other peoples. The origin of Macedonian Slavs was discussed from the early 1800's, Mønnesland says. Macedonians lacked their own written language in the Turkish time, and the illiteracy was high. It was often stated that they belonged to Bulgarians or Serbs. But none of this could be proven. The language Macedonians used was the same as Bulgarian language, and by the borders there dialects did not change much from one side to another. Bulgarians saw Macedonian as a dialect of Bulgarian.¹¹⁰ The word "Macedonian" means according to Mønnesland the "entire multi-national culture in one unity, in the heart of the Balkan. The continuity of the ancient Macedonia is therefore only in the name".¹¹¹

Macedonia, the dictionary says, was the "homeland of the ancient Dorian Greeks, and the intermediary between Hellenic and Hellenistic civilizations. The Dorians migrated southwards after 1150 BC, but one branch, the Maketoi or Macednoi, descended from the upper Haliakmon valley and dominated the region towards the Aegean". The dictionary presents a different point of view, saying Macedonians were a branch of Greeks.

The historian called Smith says the debate is important now, because no one allows people to feel Macedonian. That is why people want to prove history. In Greek books one can see Greeks fighting Alexander the Great. Denosteris, a big politician said "Will we allow one child to conquer us again?" Barbarians were not Hellenists or inhabitants of Greek *polis*, Macedonians felt like Hellenists but were called Macedonian, or Barbarians. Alexander the Great spoke to Greek soldiers, and they did not understand him, so from this one can conclude that Alexander was Macedonian, because he was different from the Hellenists. Alexander's army lacked boats, Smith continues, saying that while Greeks at that time could not imagine warfare without sea. Smith calls this an important connection.

¹¹⁰ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 130

¹¹¹ Ibid, 130

Is the continuity a way to fight back against those refusing to recognize the state, ethnic group, country, church or language of Macedonia? Macedonia is not the only place where one can find use of ancient figures for today's needs. But the needs are, naturally, different.

Milo answered that there should be made a biological examination of the DNA, which should speak for itself. The theology student also said there is no "pure" nation today. Milo says all who know of Alexander the Great, and want to follow in his footsteps, are all his followers, or heirs. The valuable work of St. Cyril and Methody was also mentioned. "All have a connection with the polarization today, that we are not Macedonians, that we do not have the right of the name Macedonia, all is connected to politics. We are not purely ancient, and we are not purely Slavs."

Evangelion calls DNA examinations funny, saying all Europeans have Celtic DNA, Albanians have some Illyrian, but Croats have more, both having almost the same Slavic blood. Almost 40% of the DNA of today's Macedonians is from Ancient Macedonians, the respondent claims. But Evangelion thinks these data are more funny than relevant, what he attaches importance to is the right to be Macedonian. "It is very important for us to be Macedonian, to be together, it makes us stronger, if someone doesn't like us, then don't touch any of us! It is very important to us today."

Both respondents from these different churches agreed the DNA of today's Macedonians is not purely ancient. Elena accepts Slavic identity rather than ancient. She sees Macedonia's past as a cross-cultural path, where cultures met, integrated and disintegrated. If it is true that Slavic people came to Macedonia in the eight century, is not a mixed blood-lined continuity to these people should be enough to claim deep roots in the area? And why is Elena the only one accepting this, and why is this not enough reason to lose interest in the whole debate, for both sides? The answer can be that identification with the Slavic people arriving in the eight century alone does not draw lines to iconic figures like Alexander the Great, or the Biblical characters. Though *Alexander*, in different variations, is a much more common name than the Biblical *Lydia*, I would say the connection with the Biblical time has importance, more about this later. Holm's theories about identifying with heroes can explain the need to draw lines to the time of these heroes, especially a conquering king like Alexander the Great, for a folk group struggling for admittance. Juergensmeyer contributes well here by explaining the use of ancient symbols, which now serve different needs than in ancient time. The debate is also attempting to legitimize the use of the name *Macedonia*.

Evangelion's statements above reminds of Holm's theories about feeling like a part of something bigger, and instead of expressing attaching of symbols of evil to other groups¹¹², the statement says: "don't touch any of us!" to those who might potentially not accept the Macedonian identity. The collective identity coming forth in the words, "to be together" and "don't touch *any of us*" is interesting, showing that the feeling of belonging to a group is strong.

The data from the interviews show an acceptance of the idea of an ancient blood line being mixed with Slavic peoples and non-Slavic groups. Does this indicate acceptance of the past, a compromise in the debate, common knowledge in demography, or the reason for the lack of interest in preserving the Macedonian blood line today? Or is it deeper history knowledge, about one's own family line? I see possibilities in all of these options. Smith the historian claimed the debate about Slavic/ancient origin is "important because no one allows us to feel Macedonian." It can seem, with a glance on Mønnesland's theory about national rebirth including the nation once being big and needs to be re-risen,¹¹³ that what Smith describes of not being "allowed to feel Macedonian" can be circumstance that breeds the need of national rebirth. It also seems like a normal reaction to draw lines to the past under such circumstances.

Macedonia in the Bible

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man from Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen this vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.¹¹⁴

Macedonia is the only one of the Balkan lands mentioned in the Bible. Perhaps the most known quote is the story from the Acts, where a Macedonian appears in a dream, calling the apostles to visit Macedonia to help. The Swedish writer Ylva Eggehorn argues that the woman who the apostles meet, Lydia, is also the one calling them in the dream.¹¹⁵ What does this mean for the national and religious identification in Macedonia today?

¹¹² Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 147

¹¹³ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 24

¹¹⁴ Acts 16:9-10. Other quotes mentioning Macedonia are Acts 18:5-6, Acts 19:21-22, Acts 19:29, Acts 20:1-4, Romans 15:26, 1 Corinthians 16:5, 2 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 7:5, Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 9:1-4, 2 Corinthians 11:9-10, Philippians 4:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:3

¹¹⁵ Eggehorn *Kryddad olja*, 143

Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church express very different feelings. Mihajlo shows different feelings by saying he is proud, but still calls the subject “no big deal”. Two theology students, the first one Markus, say one should not cling to the past, but work on the heritage now. Milo says the Bible mentioning Macedonia is not determined, thinking of, what he calls the flawed standard of Christianity in Macedonia today. Milo is making a comparison of now and then, finding today unsatisfying. The Biblical mentioning of his land takes part in setting a standard for how Christianity has been in the area, and how one can see Christianity as incomplete now. Macedonia as the first Christian area in Europe can lead to idealization of the ancient time. If one puts this in context with the previous statement, the Biblical mentioning of Macedonia becomes a source of motivation. Because the land was mentioned, and as the first Christian country in Europe, there is a Christian heritage, which must be maintained and increased. The fact that Macedonia is mentioned in the Christian canon makes one look at today with the ideal past in mind. It makes the respondents critical to passive historical remembering, and makes them, perhaps, motivated to see potential in their land, that a more satisfying standard of Christianity can be achieved.

Martin, a theologian at the Theological Faculty, speaks differently. He places his hand on his chest and says “Macedonia is a Biblical land, I cannot describe it in words, it is indescribable. I could write much about it.” Here neither the standard of Christianity then or now is mentioned, nor are any critical reflections about this, or motivations. Martin says he could write much about the subject, and chooses to describe it shortly by leaving it undescribed. Yet few words say so much about the feelings for something as “indescribable”. Whether “Macedonia is a Biblical land” expresses indescribable feelings for the nation or for the country, is not said in the statement.

Marta and Manev say Macedonia mentioned in the Bible can prove that Macedonia is old. Again the Macedonian Orthodox Church hosts people of the most varying opinions. Macedonia mentioned in the Bible provides a historical source for the name and historical roots for today’s nation. In other words, to some members, Macedonia in the Bible is not necessarily given religious context, while for others it gives a Christian heritage, and puts the standard of Christianity today into perspective. Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church have given very high value, given Macedonia a base for being called “Biblical,” to which much high feelings and importance is attached.

Evangelion, from the Evangelical Church, is also comparing the Macedonian characters in the Bible with Macedonians today. “Are we as generous as the Macedonians the Bible mentions? We must pass that test.” The descendance in itself, he claims, is unimportant. Evangelion’s statement is comparing the standard of Christianity by focusing on values. Since the theology student who talked

about standard of Christianity earlier has mentioned “fading values” as a part of this unsatisfying standard, the statements from the members of the different churches do absolutely not contradict each other. The difference is that the statement from the Orthodox theology student is stating that the standard today is unsatisfying, while Evangelion, also with a background within theology, instead asks whether the standard then and now is the same. He does not attempt to answer, but expresses a motivation to find out. This way of talking about Christianity in Macedonia today does not separate between different churches, directions or denominations, but says “we”, thus including Christianity in the country as a unit. Another difference is that Evangelion pressures only generosity, referring to a money donation the Bible mentions. Thus the respondent is not idealizing the past.

Ivana says “we are all proud”, which makes it unsure who he means; ethnic Macedonians, or all people in Macedonia, or Christians in Macedonia, and if the latter, which one of the churches. “I can joke and brag”, Ivana says. The last comment shows how she does not take it very seriously, which can be compared to what the Macedonian Orthodox students said, about not clinging to the past. But Ivana’s comment shows an informal attitude to the Bible quotes, which I have not seen among the members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

It was also said that the Bible mentioning Macedonia should motivate people to explore the Bible, which can be put into context with the statement that many members of the Orthodox majority lack knowledge about the Bible. Nenad admitted that he himself had not read the Bible, but was planning to do so. Nenad, Marta and Manev were the only interviewed member without association to the Theological Faculty. Their answers to the question about Macedonia mentioned in the Bible was that it prove the nation old, and Nenad answered that since he had not read the Bible, he lacked attachment to the quotes about Macedonia. I consider the possibility about the Biblical mentioning of Macedonia can prove Macedonia old explains why people can take this seriously, without being motivated to explore the Bible. It is possible to interpret it as a phenomena meant to strengthen the nation.

Anne, like many others, believes the first church in Europe was Illyrian. Yet most Albanians are unaware of this, she says, because they are Muslims. But Anne believes that a possible awareness of the first church in Europe being Illyrian will increase their interest in the Bible. My analysis has shown it does not have to be so. Being mentioned in a religious canon can have many different meanings, but most of these are positive.

Both churches host a variety of attitudes, only the Macedonian Orthodox one shows non-religious interpretations, both churches show attitudes that indicate motivations by Macedonia being mentioned in the Bible, Evangelion mentioning charitable generosity, Alex mentioning interest in the Bible, and the “standard of Christianity,” mentioned by the members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Respondents from both churches attached unimportance to the theme, and only in the Macedonian Orthodox Church did I find strong passion to the reason for calling Macedonia a “Biblical Land.”

Cradle of Civilizations

Markus says one should not be egocentric about the name “Cradle of Civilizations”, and is thus attaching unimportance to it. The student says Macedonia is created by God, for each other, and it is therefore not important who the cradle of civilizations is. God loves all equally, he underlines. Milo says every multi-ethnic nation and every new nation can be called the Cradle of Civilizations, repeatedly explaining that more and more multiethnic nations are born. Marta and Manev like the name, finding it suiting because of the rich heritage in old monasteries, church architecture and ecclesiastic art. Martin, the theologian, says that if one digs one half meter down one makes ancient archeological discoveries, Macedonia is an archeological treasure chest. The land is geographically small, but big in spiritual ways. There is a saying, Martin explains, that Macedonia is older than the sun, which he says is of course not true, but underlines the point of Macedonia as a location for old civilizations.

Adrian in the Evangelical Church is not familiar with the name, but mentions the spreading of the Cyrillic alphabet. This alphabet spread from Macedonia to the Slavic Eurasia, and thus the name Cradle of Civilizations makes sense to Adrian. Macedonia in this context means the whole area called Macedonia. One finds a lot if one digs, Adrian says, and thus agrees with Martin about the archeological sources. Ivana says Macedonia played many parts in history, should be self-conscious and don't take too much from outside. Alex says Macedonia ought to be given credit, but not alone! Elena finds the name a slight exaggeration, but agrees the pre – Slavic people had lots of culture and science, in this crossroad-area where cultures met and disintegrated.

There is obviously more critic found among the members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church than in the Evangelical Church. The only critical statement said is Elena's words, that the name is a slight

exaggeration. Words like “it doesn't matter” are in a sharp contrast to what the members of the Evangelical Church say. So is also the religious content three of the respondents from the Macedonian Orthodox Church put in the answers, but this is used to underline unimportance. To a member of the Evangelical Church, the name works when he spontaneously thinks of the spreading of the Cyrillic alphabet, a process with strong religious purposes and motivations. One explanation for the higher criticism in the Macedonian Orthodox Church than in the Evangelical Church, might be the fact that the latter has less deep roots in the area. No matter if one is referring to the presence and establishment of the Eastern Orthodox Church, or the Ohrid Archbishopric, the establishment of the Evangelical Church is still younger in the country. There might therefore be an increased need to draw other lines to the past, or at least, accept the symbols of this with less criticism.

Pravoslavna/Orthodox

The adjective *pravo* literally means straight, right and direct. As a noun the word means law, right and entitlement.¹¹⁶ *Pravoslavnost* means orthodoxy, and *Pravoslavna Tserkva* means Orthodox Church (the ending of the adjective is changed because *Tserkva* is feminine)¹¹⁷. It is also worth mentioning that *prvo* means first, firstly and first of all.¹¹⁸ *Pravoslavna* as Orthodox is a common word in many Slavic languages. The Russian Orthodox Church is called *Ruska Pravoslavnaia Zarkon*, for example.

The religion of the Eastern Roman Empire is the same Christianity as the Orthodox Church preaches today, Grande writes. The Orthodox Church is counted as one of the oldest churches and is said to have roots back to the first Christians. Apostolic succession is important, and¹¹⁹ according to the priests, the Church goes in a relatively direct line to the oldest Christianity, this without any breakage. The founding of the Orthodox Church is supposed to be on Whit day, when the congregation in Jerusalem received The Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Christians will say other churches are branches from the Orthodox Church.¹²⁰

Nikola, associated with the Macedonian Orthodox Theological Faculty said that since the time of St. Paul, the first half of the first century, he's the founder of the Orthodox Church, and since then

¹¹⁶ Zoze Murgoski, English Macedonian Dictionary, s.v. “право”

¹¹⁷ Zoze Murgoski, English Macedonian Dictionary, s.v. “православна Црква”

¹¹⁸ Zoze Murgoski, English Macedonian Dictionary, s.v. “прво”

¹¹⁹ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 21

¹²⁰ Grande, *Den ortodokse kirke*, 20

continuity of means church and religion, undisrupted, evolving, here since then. Nenad from the Macedonian Orthodox Church was asked about agreement on this continuity, and the answer made it more complicated, shortly saying “I both agree and disagree, it's an issue.”

Milo explained it this way, when asked about the beginning of the history of the Macedonian Orthodox Church; there was the fight for independence, Macedonian independence from the other churches. The Macedonian Orthodox Church was fighting to get free from their influence. “Some years ago we did not have any Macedonian Orthodox Church, we knew if after illegal closure, 19th Century, by the end of the Ottoman Empire”. Most important for the Macedonian Orthodox Church was the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, when it struggled, 14th to 19th century, not to become ... I then asked if the respondent would place the beginning of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to the uprising against the Ottoman Empire, or to the beginning of Christianity. The answer was that the very beginning takes place at sixth century, while the Macedonian Orthodox Church is heir to the Ottoman Empire. According to Milo, the Orthodox Church ought gratitude to the Skopje-born Emperor Justinian, for his effort in founding the church, considering the seat of the bishop of Ohrid. This is fully named the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Ohrid Archbishopric, because the Ohrid location, Milo tells. He says that this event had its birth in the Justinian rule, “so the place we had in history is always connected to the emperor Justinian. The upcoming of the church is all the way from the 6th century, and 19th century, but was abolished, by the Ottoman Empire.” I interpret Milo's history reflections as an ode to characters he feels have contributed much, but I also understand that by saying the church was abolished under the Ottomans, he allows an interruption of the continuity. But another possible interpretation is that when saying “the *upcoming* of the church is all the way from the 6th to the 19th century”, that Milo considers all these centuries a part of the birth phase, or rather a formative phase of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Respondents from the Macedonian Orthodox Church show different attitudes to the continuity of the Orthodox Church. Nikola says the Orthodox Church was founded by the Biblical apostle Paul, while Milo places the beginning in the sixth century. What does this tell? I would say it indicates that there is a discussion about this matter, in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. And Milo's well explained attitude shows that, like in most debates, profound explanations are to be found. Nenad's answer, about him both agreeing and disagreeing, shows that he has been thinking of this, despite not having read any of the Bible. Milo is drawing lines to the ancient past, despite not placing the beginning at the Biblical time of Paul. When interviewing him, I asked about the beginning (and the translator also said) of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and not the Orthodox Church. None of the

interviewed members placed the beginning in the establishment of the Ohrid Parhriarchality. It shows that deep roots matter.

Why all of this?

The religion and religious symbols are often used to strengthen the meaning and persistence of the nation. It then happens, and is not unusual, that people use mythological language, for example from the Bible,¹²¹ and identify oneself as God's chosen people, and the nation as the promised land. Holm calls this nation strengthening religious faith *civil religion*.¹²²

Peacocks, the bird seen on coins, bank notes, wine etiquettes and in the St. Sveti Naum monastery, is understood as a holy bird in many religions, in Christianity a symbol of resurrection and eternal life. This is connected to the belief that the peacock always renews its feather coat. It is also connected to the belief that peacock meat never rots. In the catacombs one can often find images of two peacocks drinking from a cup, symbolizing the believing drinking water of life in paradise. But also, a peacock with spread feathers can symbolize haughtiness.¹²³ The colors white and yellow symbolize light, justice, purity, innocence, holiness, party and joy.¹²⁴ All asked respondents answered that they have personal role models within the history of Macedonia, or the Balkans. Some are religious leaders, some state leaders, some independence fighters during the Ottoman time.

Adrian made a comparing between the Macedonian society and the individual to answer to the accusation about Macedonia being more focused on the past than on the present. With Macedonia is it the same as with any country, had position previously, and tends to look at the past naturally, but only the phase that certain people might be passing through, with brave individuals that look for the future. When the individual has been going through enough years, memories are normal, as is to look back to times to be proud, and tell about accomplishments, but can thus fall into traps, if passing the limits of healthy thinking, instead of living in the present all attention goes to the past, and it leads to poverty.

Does religion encourage the continuity? Yes, in the term *Pravoslavna*. And ethnicity does in the debate about the origin of Macedonians. Continuity with the past is also marked in the peacocks

¹²¹ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 87

¹²² Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 88

¹²³ Skottene, *Kristne symboler*, 164f

¹²⁴ Skottene, *Kristne symboler*, 131

walking around and showing off in the monastery of St. Sveti Naum, thus *religija* is used to encourage this. Church members, and potential leaders, expressing strong understanding of the need of calling oneself Macedonian has the same effect, while attaching unimportance to the blood line makes this a matter of symbolism, instead of biology.

National rebirth includes thoughts that the nation once was big, and this needs to be re-risen. It becomes important to show to previous, geographic out stretching and deep roots in the area, Mønnesland says.¹²⁵ My own thoughts are that religion has been present for so long, people have been familiar with it for so many hundred years, so using it will naturally pay off, be effective, if not in some cases necessary. It is a matter of what Holm calls structuring models. People must these models, to understand the impressions from the senses. These structuring models make people search and accept the part as human beings in a holy tale. History can thus be interpreted as God playing his part in this tale.¹²⁶ This theory makes the cherishing of continuity with the past seem natural in religion, as a way to tell a story about humans and God. Religion itself contains continuity with the past, but certain phenomena encourage it more than others. To understand religion and continuity with the past in Macedonia, the history chapter, and Adrian's words, can describe how religion has been such an important part of the identity to the Macedonians, during the Ottoman regime as well as the Yugoslav time, and there is an urge to re-define oneself by using the identity markers the suppressors forbade. This is also a part of taking distance from the suppressors. History, the very science of continuity with the past, was silenced during the Yugoslav regime, and historical consciousness now rapidly evolving, like mushrooms after rain.

About the unimportance attached, I say all people still underline the right to identify with the history and the identity. Is the open and including right to everyone to identify with the Macedonian culture and history a reaction to the debate about the origin of today's Macedonians, which includes statements that prevents today's Macedonians from identifying with the name, or ancient roots? I say it is possible this might be. This chapter has seen use of religion to establish roots to the past, and seen continuity with the past being used to stress Christian morale. Highly different attitudes have been discovered. The chapter opened with a vignette of a few – of many - examples of symbols of continuity with ancient past being used in the public life. Two theories were discussed and criticized, and used to explain certain causes of the use of symbols expressing continuity with the past. The chapter discussed, after this, the importance people attach to the debate about whether Macedonians have Slavic or ancient origin. An acceptance of the idea of an ancient blood line being mixed with

¹²⁵ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 24

¹²⁶ Holm, *Människans symboliska verklighetsbygge*, 30

Slavic people, as well as with non-Slavic groups, was discovered and seems accepted, in both churches. A discussion about the image of not being accepted is explained as the reason for importance being attached to the idea of today's Macedonians having – mixed or not – roots in the people inhabiting the land in ancient time. The discussion about Macedonia being mentioned in the Bible, and about Macedonia being called the “Cradle of Civilizations,” revealed consequences of religion being used to strengthen the meaning and persistence of the nation. This showed to go the other way too; religious heritage can thus be given fertile soil. Quotes like “all multiethnic states are the cradle of civilizations” have revealed individual interpretations of the concept. Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church than expressed more critical attitudes compared to the members of the Evangelical Church, but in both churches some members attached religious content to this name. This can be explained by the theme that followed the discussion about the roots of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The lines to the past the different members draw indicate that deep roots have importance. The Evangelical Church not having deep roots in the area might be an explanation on why the respondents of this church are less critical to the name “Cradle of Civilizations”; continuity with the past are less deep in their church history, so they seek other lines to the past instead.

The urban landscape in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, has plenty of symbols expressing continuity with ancient past. Lines to the past are seen many places, also away from Skopje, for example in towns like Ohrid. Next chapter will continue the discussion about these symbols, by analyzing one very attention-grabbing artifact.

Let us return to the large, attention-grabbing statue in the middle of the square. Many people who pass by stop to look at the fountain. Some walk all the stairs up till they almost get wet from the bouncing water. Some take photos, some just look a little bit and some, well-dressed and walking in fast speed, do not move an eyebrow. One man passing by says it is annoying when gypsies bath their young children in the fountain pool. Statues resembling Metodija Andonov-Cento, Tsar Samoil, Justinian I, “boatmen of Thessaloniki”, Dimitrija Cupovski (textbook and dictionary writer in Macedonian language), Goce Delcev and Dame Gruev (revolutionaries) riding on horses, and Dimitar Popgeorgiev (revolutionary) can be noticed and observed when the eyes turn away from the monument and explores the surroundings. All the portrayed people are ethnic Macedonian. A statue of Mother Theresa, an ethnic Albanian, is to be found if one walks about one hundred meters west of the square.

What can this analyze contribute with? First, religion theories will be used to analyze it. Emilé Durkheim, Thomas Tweed, David Chidester and Edward T. Linental have all composed relevant theories, about religion and society, religion and space, and the sacred and power. These will be used to look for religious content in the monument. The chapter will discuss people’s reactions to this, an example of a national hero potentially used in sacralization acts, an example of continuity with the past being dramatically demonstrated in public. I will analyze and compare the opinions of the members of the different churches. This chapter will also carry on the work of the previous chapter, by looking at continuity with the past, and see if the respondents believe in any timeless solution for issues in today’s Macedonia expressed in this statue. The previous chapter explored the importance of expressing continuity with the past, and this chapter will see if this is reflected in the attitudes towards the Alexander-statue.

Having a Christian or Muslim symbol in the middle of the square might have been a larger risk. Alexander the Great is neutral, but his ethnic origin is claimed by Albanians as well as Macedonians and Greeks. This gives the impression that highlighting the historical person leads to different attempts to claim his origin, instead of visible signs of unification taking place. Can this effect be explained with all the picturing of warfare? And could the effect be different if the chosen religiously neutral figure was not a conqueror, and did not date so far back in time the origin could be debated? These questions are still to be answered.

Debates about Skopje 2014 involve national identity, nationalism, religion, ethnicity and economics. The project is both praised and criticized, much of the latter for the high cost. The statue was initiated with a large public meeting, music and drama, and the online magazine Balkan Insight

reported many spectators crying and whispering “Alexander has come home,” and saying this confirmed Macedonia's identity. The government, especially Prime Minister Nicola Gruevski is profiled as the main mind behind the project, and he claims it is to redecorate the gray city center.¹²⁷ The costs are said to be from 80 to over 500 million euros, and is financed with tax money. Some say the project is meant to distract people from Macedonia's problems with poverty and unemployment. Architects have criticized the project for lacking contemporary design; nearly all the figures are in classic antique style.¹²⁸

Smith confirms that all monuments represent ethnic Macedonians, and none are Muslim. The statue of the ethnic Albanian George Kastrioti Skanderbeg is not a part of the Skopje 2014 project, but built with donations from people of Albanian background. Smith says many of the statues do not place the figures they resemble according to where these lived or were born. Andonov, for example, was born in Prilep and died in Prilep, while Tsar Samoil was active in Ohrid. But Skopje was a city without spirit, and the presence of some statues in the center stills the urging needs, the historian insists.

This chapter will continue with respondents' opinions about the whole Skopje 2014-project. After this it will describe and analyze the esthetics of the Alexander Makedonski-statue, before carrying on with respondents' opinions about this monument. Some of these will be taken further into a religion-scientific analyze under the next headline. Theories about religion will be used here, among others by Mircea Eliade and Emile Durkheim, to try to explain reactions and purposes about the monument. Relevant symbols will be the theme as the chapter continues, these will both be from theories as mentioned above, and from in comparison with today's Macedonian society. Today's Macedonian society will later be the main focus, as the chapter ends in discussing the consequences of the monument being placed where it is placed, and looking the way it looks, asking whether it is uniting or dividing to the different folk groups and religions. Let us begin with opinions from members of the Evangelical Church.

Opinions about Skopje 2014

Alex personally likes the project, and the possibilities for tourism in it. He says Macedonia deserves this reflection of the history of the nation, to remind people of those who have contributed to

¹²⁷ Marusic, “Skopje 2014 Forges Ahead Despite Macedonian Crisis“

¹²⁸ Wikipedia, s.v. “Skopje 2014“ 03.12.2012

Macedonia, for example St. Cyril and Methody. Adrian agrees. Ivana praises the portrayed people, and the architectural replicas. She is for the buildings, not the statues. Anne says “this nationalism which is stronger among the Macedonians, it increases hatred”, and Eric also express critical feelings towards the Alexander-monument, considering the tensions and the ethnic heterogeneity in Macedonia today. Elena says as follows: “I really don't think that, with the ethnic situation in Macedonia today, there should be such a monument in the very heart of the country.”

Manev, from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, says he loves all of the monuments, especially King Samoil. He only dislikes the placement of statues resembling people from different periods in the same place. Both Manev and Marta value the statue of Alexander the Great the most, they say. Nenad considers the project necessary for the history and culture of Macedonia. He praises St. Cyril and Methody, and claims the patriotic interest is new. Martin corrects *Alexander the Great* to *Alexander Makedonski*, and negatively calls the project more political than spiritual, but is very happy St. Cyril and Methody are portrayed. Markus is positive to the attempt to show Macedonia being more than “small, anonymous and conflicted”, but a place of enlightenment, spiritual advancement and progress. Markus wishes more cultural expressions outside the capital.

Milo disapproves religious objects being placed in central locations (“don’t want to place the Church in the middle, better to be away, go with purpose, it is more rewarding,” Macedonian proverb). Churches are for praying, and not tourist attractions. Milo criticizes the aesthetics, saying “Alexander the Great dominates, the perspective is wrong, it is wrong to use a historical figure for political purposes, and in a some way godlike image.”

Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church do not mention or question the appropriacy considering the ethnically heterogeneous Macedonia, which is mentioned in the Evangelical Church. This makes a difference. What Milo criticizes the “godlike image” of the statue. It is difficult to find similar statements among the members of the Evangelical Church. Elena says the monument takes up the place where a Christmas tree used to stand, and Ivana negatively says people worship buildings instead of God. This is the closest I come to consensus here. The possibilities of tourism in Skopje 2014 is mentioned as something very positive by Alexander in the Evangelical Church, and negatively by Milo in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. But the initiative to present the culture and history of the nation is mentioned positively by members of both churches. The statues of, and the representativeness of, St. Cyril and Methody, is mentioned only positively by several members of both churches. In the contrary, the Alexander Makedonski-monument is described with mixed feelings in most answers. A difference is that the underlined necessity of the project, mentioned by

Nenad and also the historian; Smith, is hard to match in the answers from the Evangelical Church. Expressions of wishes for similar projects outside the capital is in my research only found among members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The attitudes are more varied in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. What can explain this? The Evangelical Church is much smaller. But here we have Elena criticizing the Alexander-monument while Alexander praises it. And we have the large Macedonian Orthodox Church, with members like Milo, who says “kitsch” and Godlike image, while Nenad underlines the necessity in it all, and Markus says he wants more of the project outside Skopje. We also see Marta and Manev expressing strong, uncritical and affectionate attachments to the monument. The Evangelical Church does not preach about politics or Skopje 2014, but allowing people choose their opinions freely. But opinions spoken among members of a group affect each other, even if the group institution chooses not to influence. I would say members of the Evangelical Church likely share opinions, and naturally get influenced by each other, as people do when discussing. But, naturally, people are not adapting others' opinions, which show in for example Elena and Alexander expressing so different attitudes.

Describing the monument

First, why this analysis? Describing and analyzing the aesthetics of this statue helps giving an understanding of what exactly people see when looking at the monument. Explaining aesthetic functions – movement, balance, rhythm, contrasts, proportions and harmony – are very important to approach how a visual figure communicates. Let us start at the bottom of the monument. The foot is a circular fountain surrounded by male lions, and the fountain surrounds a cylinder (decorated with oak leaves) on which soldiers stand. The soldiers surround a tall, thick column with a plateau on top. On the plateau a brass statue of Alexander the Great takes place, riding on his horse. The soldiers around the pillars are equipped with helmets, shields and weapons (the shields have the Vergina Sun), some soldiers are in attacking positions and some are in guarding positions. Behind the soldiers is the Vergina Sun. This symbol is the same as the wood carving described in the beginning of the introduction chapter, and is shown in the illustrations of this chapter. Smith says it was the seal of Alexander the Great, re-appeared in the Byzantine time, and was used in the old flag of Macedonia. Greece later forbade the use of the symbol, and today's Macedonian flag uses an abstract version.

Alexander on his horse (the large picture), and from left one brass soldier with the Vergina Sun on his shield, one of the lions and the oak leaves, all belonging to the monument. Illustration by Dimitar Gjorgiev



L. Thynd.

The Vergnia Sun is frequently used in popular culture. I bought a small glass with the symbol on, and one can see the symbol in the illustrations of this chapter. Over the soldiers, upwards the pillar,

there are rings with reliefs in marble, with depicted battle scenes. These are alternating with rings of brass, the lowest with flowers (in the botanical family of anemones), over these a ring of small plants in a pattern, and further up leaves that hold the upper plateau (like the botanical function of sepals). Water fall from the plateau edge, some of the waves hit some of the spears. Two spears are hit by both the falling water and up shooting water.

The male lions around the statue's feet are numbered eight, every other facing outward, every other facing inward and helping out to squirt water. Their expressions look quite peaceful. The function of male lions is to fight to protect the herd, and to reproduce. When they take over a new herd, they kill the lion cubs. The weapon of the leading political party is a lion with one tail, traditionally a similar lion with two tails symbolize religious and secular power. The lions around the Alexander statue all have one tail each. The number of tails is worth noticing, because a two-tailed lion was the symbol of the uprising organization during the Ottoman time, the two tail symbolizing earthly and spiritual power. Lions spouting water stand on small spirals, reminiscent of small heads of Ionic columns (found in several Skopje 2014 buildings) and is thought, in ancient architecture, to resemble the female body. The water streams are highly variable, ranging from sharp, thin rays of soft clouds. This constant, rapid alternating attracts much attention to the statue. At night, the water gets illuminated with different colored lights. Alexander on the horse is dressed in armor and is directing the pulled sword towards the southeast, where his conquests began. It's not easy to look up to Alexander on his horse on lightly cloudy or sunny days, because of the sharp light.

Relevant observations of the composition are, first, that the plateau makes the movement in the monument depend on where one stands. At a distance one first looks at Alexander, then the fountains, so the soldiers, then back to Alexander and back down. Standing closer one first looks at the soldiers, and then up to the plateau, seeing Alexander only in the edge of the eye. Nothing leads the eye up to him. The balance is bold; it easily becomes overweight with such a big item so high up. It is a bit weighted up by the rings of flowers around marble pillar being narrow, making the pillar look broad and stable, and that the fountain is broader. But the horse and the drawn sword look very dynamic, action-packed and powerful, which risks compositional overweight. The rhythm shows that the organic, dynamic and outermost irregular soldiers are very eye-catching compared to the rest of the statue's lower part. The most striking contrast is large/small, Alexander is so much larger than the rest of the figures. This might be value perspective. The use of brass gives harmony to the whole monument. Otherwise there is little uniting Alexander on his horse with the rest of the monument. This apart, the expression is aesthetic but aggressive. Weapons, war and soldiers is the impression

one gets, the only soft, peaceful and feminine are the flowers and water clouds alternating the hard rays. Oak symbolizes strength. Oak is a strong, hard type of wood, and has long been used as a symbol of strength. Leaves of oak are also used in victory wreaths. The young trees give association to replanting. The numbers in the monument is not without symbolism, there are eight soldiers and eight lions that together make 16, which corresponds to the cones in the Vergina Sun.

Opinions about the statue

None of my informants said they go to the square to see the monument. They look at the statue if errands bring them there. Attitudes and feelings towards the statue differ from strong dislike to strong attachment, just like their attitudes towards the other issues addressed to the project. Milo said the monument is kitsch and Disneyland-like, and that the city should look more serious, while Marta and Manev said "It is not about seeing, just knowing that he (Alexander the Great) is there means so much, it makes me joyful and happy!" (Marta said, and Manev agrees).

In both churches I got varying answers. Both churches have members who dislike and like the monument, but it was in the Macedonian Orthodox Church had answered most variation. In the Evangelical Church the answers were more mixed, many people said they dislike something and like something about the monument.

Elena says she indeed thinks a land with "our ethnic composition should not have such a monument in the heart of the country." Elena says one should not be proud of a man who killed so many. But the esthetic appeal was approved and liked. Smith says the interest and attachment to the Skopje 2014-project belongs to the ethnic Macedonian majority. Thus the interpretation gets ethnic content.

"Alexander had an open mind, his idea was a world without boundaries, no matter what background one had, all should live without ties, simply. He had progressive ideas about uniting and reach progress through education" said Adrian from the Evangelical Church. When I asked whether this shows in the statue, the respondent said "it is consistent in the statue, when the tourists research this". If the purpose of building the statue was to decorate the city center, I do not see the necessity in the pictured battle scenes, and dare to say the reliefs could have shown religious and cultural tolerance instead. The reliefs could have pictured weddings between Greeks and Persians, instead of battle

scenes. Anemones and the soft water spray are the only peaceful elements, otherwise the monument gives an expression of battles, weapons and conquests. This raises questions on whether it, considering the tensed situation in Macedonia today, would have been possible as well as more considerate to picture Alexander the Great the way Adrian describes him. One can wonder if this could give the statue uniting qualities.

Eric says the statue is not expressing hostility against ethnic Albanians, but is provocative to Greece. The money should be spent differently, Eric thinks. But the statue represents to him the “Spirit of Warfare”, which he finds harmful to the society. The Ottomans came with fighting, he explains. “The empire is now gone, but the demon is still present.”

Alex, from the Evangelical Church, says the ancient king is on his right place, because of his importance, and would not like to have him replaced. Alexander explains he does not look for religion, but historic monuments and memorials. Nenad, from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, gives what can be understood as an explanation of what the previous respondent just said. “Alexander is important for our history, and it's not a matter of religious/non-religious, no matter if he was Muslim or Orthodox, he's a treasure, and he is appreciated for that. *Alexander Makedonski* cannot be replaced, and if so, who would that be? I can't imagine.”

Markus, from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, says the statue of Alexander the Great divides people into two leading parties, the position and the opposition, people who like it and people who don't, because of different opinions about Alexander the Great. Markus is proud of Alexander the Great as the forefather of the people, and feels proud when he sees the statue, considering the ancient king part of him. But overall, he finds it not important where you come from, but who you are. A proverb says as follows; *who your father is, is not important, it's how you act in the world, who you are in the moment*. Markus thinks too much attention is given to the past, instead of finding out who they are and where they are going. He says people see Alexander the Great for the “wrong reasons”.

Here I would like to put Markus's statement about people see the person Alexander the Great for the wrong reasons in context with other statements. It can be understood as the character and icon having potential for national pride, potential for a symbol of unity, and can positively be seen as a forefather of the people. But instead it is misused, and symbolizes the spirit of warfare, and overly focusing on the past. It is not relevant that he is not Christian, not to any of the interviewed people. Different qualities (positive and negative) of the historical character are highlighted by different people in different churches; Elena mentions all the killing, while Adrian mentions the attempts to create unity.

Here it is also important to mention members of the Evangelical Church bring up the mixed ethnicity and the consequences of Alexander the Great standing in the middle of the square have for this. One reason for this can be that two of the people talking about this – Eric and Anne – are marginal.

Several respondents were asked whether they would have voted for Alexander the Great had he lived today and ran for the presidential election. All said they would have had to hear his views first. Only Marta and Manev immediately said they would have voted for him. Marta stated that had he been alive today, Macedonia would have been a different Macedonia. The Greek part of the country would have been included “as it is supposed to be”, and the empire would have outlasted the Roman. Macedonia would be larger and stronger. Milo said that if Alexander the Great had lived today he would not have been fighting for territories. “He is sitting on his horse with his sword in his hand, but he would not have done it today.” Ivana states that if Alexander the Great had kept what he was, Macedonia would have been pure Macedonian and pure Macedonian Orthodox, since the king was imposing his cultures and believes. Within the Evangelical Church both Ivana and Elena say they were not comfortable with Alexander the Great’s sexual orientation.

The answers show differing opinions (negatively; a killer of many people and an imposer of his own culture, and positively; as a creator of unity) about the ancient king in the Evangelical Church, and, in the Macedonian Orthodox Church, differing opinions about how Alexander the Great would have been today. They also show two strong agreements in the Evangelical Church, and the Macedonian Orthodox Church hosts the only ones standing out as very positive to voting for him. The use of the figure Alexander Makedonski is, today, different from in his time. Now his function is symbolic. There is, with two exceptions, a common skepticism to the historical Alexander the Great as a politician. This shows an awareness of current political needs different than from the past, I would say. Does this indicate no belief in a timeless solution? The thesis will again look at that question in the last chapter.

How come only the Macedonian Orthodox Church hosts members who immediately said they would vote for him? Marta and Manev are strongly attached to the old Macedonian flag, with Vergina Sun. using digital accessories, domestic items and clothes with it attached. It can also be put under the question previously written in this chapter, of how come the opinions in the Macedonian Orthodox Church are more differing than in the Evangelical Church. The explanation is, again, that the Evangelical Church is so much smaller, and people there interact and share opinions, and opinions can get influenced by each other. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church there are very few, if any, arrangements for such collective meetings or assemblies of all members within a country, or even a

city. It is thus possible that people with the opinions of Marta and Manev hand-pick friends and conversation partners who share these strong attachments to national symbols like Alexander the Great. Another explanation is that most of the members of the Evangelical Church have changed church, and thus experienced parts of their symbol world changed. This can lead to profound re-thinking of other symbols they find important, and thus lead to increased reflections on matters like the warrior on the horse standing in the center of their hometown, as a 24 meters tall monument.

Another explanation is that the Evangelical Church is a part of a transnational religion, and the members are thus less inclined to nationalist symbols. For example, the Vergnia Sun carved on the throne of the Archbishop of Ohrid (head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church) means less to Evangelical Protestants. The situation can also be explained inversely, members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church are prone to nationalist symbols.

Markus saying "Alexander the Great dominates, the perspective is wrong, it is wrong to use a historical figure for political goals, and in such god-like expressions," will be used again under the following headline.

Analysis

The field work is gifted with the metaphor of the square in Skopje as the "heart of the country", and the monument has been called a godlike image. This chapter will take a short look at the theories about nostalgia to a golden age, that might be a thought behind the statue. Then it will continue by using the theories about the sacred space as "not discovered or founded, but claimed and owned by people with specific interests" by David Chidester and Edward T. Linental. Thomas Tweed's theories from his book *Crossing and Dwelling* will later be used. Further theories will be by Emilé Durkheim. The reason why this work uses these theories is because they all focus on religion, in a society-related perspective, and can explain much about the monument. They can also explain the relevance of dedicating a chapter of this thesis to the monument; the theories explain what the monument adds to an approach of religion and national identification in Macedonia.

At first the monument reminds me of the Axis mundi in Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*. It is tempting to picture it as a renewal ritual of the place, with the sword of the warrior directed to the South East, where the conquests began, but also where Greece is, a state refusing to

acknowledge Macedonia, and where Turkey is, the country once conquering Macedonia. It is very tempting to see the monument as a cosmization of the place, expressing aggression to the threatening chaos forces. But to make a more serious approach, can the orientation towards a potential golden age of the past be compared to orientation towards the lost paradise? In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, with Eliade as editor, "golden age" is defined as follows: "broadest sense, any mythical, paradisiacal time of origins. In common discourse, transformed into quasi-historical label for periods of wealth or human achievement."¹²⁹ This definition opens for there being attached feelings of a golden age to Alexander the Great's reign. Furthermore, the same encyclopedia says:

"Nostalgia for the beginning of plantings is clearly a permanent feature of mankind's collective memory, and representation of a golden age provides the archetype through which all the nostalgia is repeatedly expressed. As can be seen by the study of various peoples and cultures, man has everywhere sought to explain present condition through the contrast it provides to his supposed primordial condition, in light of that contrast, he has also classified and interpreted his mythical, historical and symbolic heritage and related these to sacred history."¹³⁰

Mønnesland says in the previously mentioned book that in the early 1800's, suppressed nations discovered their identity and wished autonomy, and the right to use their own culture and language, indicating the start of national movements. They used history to draw lines to times of autonomy and also to golden ages.¹³¹ There might be possibilities for Alexander's reign, and the period that followed, when Macedonia's borders still were wide, can be related to golden age nostalgia. It is not difficult to imagine that a time as a conquering power means much for a country that has been conquered for so long, and so many times, as Macedonia. It has been said in an interview that it is precisely the reason heroes like Alexander the continuity with the past - particularly ancient times - is important in the search for identity for people in Macedonia today. These thoughts are not trying to uncritically cling to a possibly outdated theory, I am only suggesting nostalgic longing to a great kingdom in the past might occupy the same mental space as nostalgic longing for a lost paradise. I believe this longing, religious or desacralized, can, as Nils G. Holm's theories seem to say, increase faith in oneself, the human race, and one's group, as well as in one's history. It is like I, as a Swede, take pride in the progress of Swedish musicians, without having any skills myself in any musical performance.

¹²⁹ *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Golden Age"

¹³⁰ *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v., "Fall, The"

¹³¹ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 55

Let us approach more contemporary theories. David Chidester and Edward T. Linental do not see the sacred space as something merely discovered founded or constructed, like Eliade did with his hierophanies. Chidester and Linental say “the sacred space is inevitably a contested space, a site of negotiated contests over the legitimate ownership of sacred symbols.” The scholars refer to Michel Foucault, who insisted space is, in any exercise of power, fundamental. In any production of space, sacred space in particular, power is asserted and resisted. And since this is not merely something given, the ownership will always be at stake.¹³² Do we see an act of claiming the power in erecting this statue, and, if so, who is claiming it? The government is responsible for it, so it must be them. And is the ownership at stake? Had nothing been at stake, I do not see why claiming this would be necessary. The shared motivation for raising the statue is to decorate the city center, but claiming sacred space and asserting power do sound like a more convincing explanation for the government finding it necessary to raise a 24 meters tall, attention-grabbing and very expensive statue. Sacred space is claimed and owned, the scholars continue. Sacred space is operated by people advancing specific interests. Sacred places are always highly charged sites for contested negotiations over the ownership of the symbolic capital (or symbolic real estate) that signifies power relations. Although spearheaded by specific cultural entrepreneurs, cultural brokers, or cultural workers, struggles over the ownership of sacred space inevitably draw upon the commitment of larger constituencies that hold an investment in the contest.”¹³³ The statue is, according to these theories, placed in a strategical spot in the urban landscape, not because of some hierophani, and for the purpose of claiming sacred space. Sacred space is claimed because of interests in claiming it. Alexander the Great never set his foot where his monument stands, the city called Skopje did not exist before the romans built it, calling it Scupi. Is it correctly understood that, according to this theory, building the statue in today's FYROM, is a way of manifesting power in the place? Is it a way of sacralizing the place? It does make much sense.

Mønnesland writes that since Serbia claims the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Bulgaria claims the Macedonian language, and Greece claims the territory, both Macedonia and the Macedonian Orthodox Church have a precarious existence.¹³⁴ One sees how this can be an example of the ownership of the sacred space being at stake, and needing to be claimed.

Thomas Tweed, in the book *Crossing and Dwelling*, explains how religion provides a sense of belonging to members, including reminders of from where they have come, and a prelude to what the

¹³² Chidester, and Linental, *American Sacred Space*, 17f

¹³³ Ibid, 17f

¹³⁴ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia og etter*, 186

future holds. Religion, Tweed says, has four cronotypes, which, including the body, are the home (anything from a cave to a nation state), the homeland and cosmos. These inform and are informed by religion. “The importance of religion in the concept of dwelling resides in the ability to anchor these 'cronotypes' in a variety of artifacts and in transmitting them, culturally and generationally, in rituals.”¹³⁵

Can one, from this theory, see this monument fulfilling the functions of religion? It has been said that the monument confirms the identity of Macedonia, and thus see how the monument provides a sense of belonging. Among my interview answers the closest one can come to a similarity is what Marta and Manev say. These two, passive members of the majority church, stand out among the rest of my respondents, who are all active members. I would like to state that they are not the only ones with this attachment to Alexander Makedonski, and that also statements like the one Alexander provide, about the ancient king being the most valued character in their history, can be understood as the monument giving reminders of where people have come. The lion figures are also providing reminders about the past, by being the symbol of the uprising movement during the Ottoman time. The lion also symbolizes Christ, which may refer both to the Christian heritage and of hopes of a Christian future. The lion was a symbol of resurrection in the ancient church,¹³⁶ and may thus be understood as a symbol of Macedonia rising after long time of conquered. Thus the lions can also be understood as a prelude to what the future holds.

Can one see the home (anything from a cave to a nation state), the homeland and cosmos, informing and informed by religion, in the monument? Alexander the Great never set his foot in Skopje, the city did not exist in his time. It was built by the romans, who called it Scupi. Pella, where the ancient king was born, is now in Greece. Now a 24 meters tall monument is placed in the central square, given an impersonal name, yet undoubtedly being called Alexander the Great, can this be a way of using informing the home, homeland and cosmos? Is it a way of placing Macedonia on the world map and in world history, a way of adding attributes to the homeland and adding happiness and joy to homes of people like Marta and Manev? Yes, I say, finding it very hard not seeing the erection of the Alexander-monument as a way of planting a flag in the ground where geographically tied identity is attached.

“The importance of religion in the concept of dwelling resides in the ability to anchor these 'cronotypes' in a variety of artifacts and in transmitting them, culturally and generationally, in

¹³⁵ Stausberg, *Contemporary Theories of Religion*, 213

¹³⁶ Skottene, *Kristne symboler*, 66

rituals.”¹³⁷ The closest one can come to a ritual connected to this monument is the unveiling ceremony, so unless it is enough to satisfy the need for rituals in Tweed's theory, this is a point where the Alexander-monument cannot fulfill the functions of religion in Tweed's theory.

The validity of these theories in this thesis are subject to the Alexander Makedonski-monument has elements of religion. The theories of Emile Durkheim will help out in discussing this. Can the Alexander monument be put up against the society related theories of Durkheim? "Religion is a unified system of beliefs relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden." The purpose of religion, on the basis of Durkheim's theories, is to unite individual and moral society. Holy things always involve big measures, not just small groups. Holy things are always superior and separated as powerful, forbidden for normal contact, and deserving respect.¹³⁸ "It (religion) serves as the carrier two social sentiments, symbols and rituals providing symbols and rituals that enable people to express the deep emotions which anchor them to their community."¹³⁹

Durkheim believes religion is society expressing their rites of worship of itself.¹⁴⁰ It looks like the Alexander monument may fulfill the function of religious symbols provide. If one looks at the comments from Balkan Insight, and the comment from Marta and Manev, stating that seeing the monument is not necessary, since knowing Alexander Makedonski is there is enough. The people saying this use the symbol as accessories, on clothes, gifts and interior artifacts. The statue seems to link these people to their community, and the figures and symbols in it seem to be important parts of their identification.

Durkheim mentions "large measures" in his description of the holy. This quality is found in the monument, as is superiority, and standing out as powerful, and the statue expresses respect to the person Alexander, but does it fill in the quality of prohibitions against normal contact? Alexander is placed on a high pedestal, where the composition is not actually uniting Alexander with the rest of the monument. Or with the ground. When standing close or nor far away from the statue, one is literally gazing up on him, feeling he is beyond reach. And there is the size of the statue. Not all statues placed on pillars are that big, for example Lord Nelson's statue in Trafalgar Square, London, is incomparably much smaller. What does it mean, rising a statue of that size, in such an easily noticeable spot? The square has several other statues, all of them on podiums. The only one close to

¹³⁷ Stausberg, *Contemporary Theories of Religion*, 213

¹³⁸ Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 96

¹³⁹ Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, 107

¹⁴⁰ Gilhus and Mikaelsson, *Nytt blick på religion*. 22

the ground is Mother Theresa, standing humbly outside her rebuilt house. One can easily touch her statue. But this humble, female, ethnic Albanian figure is not a part of the Skopje 2014-project.

Meanings, feelings and attitudes of Alexander the Great's monument on the square show very limited belief in a timeless solution, and gives a look into the interaction and exchange of meanings in the small Evangelical Church, and the Macedonian Orthodox majority. The chapter looked deeply into one statement, and used theories by Durkheim to explain why. This chapter has used theories to explain and analyze the functions of sacred space, and seen how these work against this monument.

By analyzing the composition in the statue one can clearly understand why Markus says the statue presents Alexander the Great in a godlike image: the movement not leading to eye up to him, the value perspective, the bold balance that shows what makes someone say “Alexander the Great dominates”. This chapter has taken Markus’ words about a godlike image, and approached it with theories about the claiming of sacred space. This has given an example of religion and nationalism tightly combined.

Let me use some theoretical questions to ask what this chapter has shown. Have we seen a symbol of the nation as an “idol” competing with Christian faith, or nationalism taking over for religion? Or have we seen nationalism becoming religion to the people? I would say that according to the theories by Tweed, Durkheim, Chidester and Linental we have seen a monument fulfilling functions they attribute to religion. We have seen different reactions to a figuration of continuity with the past, that has been frequently used in asserting a nation. And we have seen theories that might give reasons for the use of continuity with the past, in that it obviously is useful in understanding of sacred space. This chapter let the theory about golden ages give a hint to an explanation to what can be understood as the experience of a connection between the understanding of sacred and cherished old times.

National Attitudes and Religion Together

This chapter will begin with a little history told by Smith and Adrian, which will be analyzed and discussed. Two questions will be used to approach the theme of Christianity and national attitudes together: where goes the limits, and how do the two variables influence each other. This discussion will start by approaching interviews with respondents from the Evangelical Church, and then with people from the Macedonian Orthodox Church. I will compare and discuss similarities and differences. After this I intend to set up a model, intending to explain Christianity and national attitudes together. I intend to put the answers of different respondents up against this model. This is to explain their attitudes, and to test the model. After this I intend to compose a second model, called the Triangular Model, to explain different matters, found in the interview data. Attitudes will be set up against this too, and the chapter will end in a discussion and conclusion.

Some History told by Smith and by Adrian

Adrian takes another sip of his soda glass and starts telling. “In Strunits there was this girl, some high Turks had come to her home to eat dinner, and one of them saw the girl, and said he liked her eyes (they were green). The Ottomans often took girls they liked, converted them to Islam and placed them in the harems; the girl took out her eyes and gave them to the Turk on a plate. 'Here you are, I'll stay here!' It was a sacrifice for Christ. Turks would not allow churches to be higher than mosques, and in this time Christians came closer together. The feeling for freedom, uprising faith, and these two came together.”

When I am done writing this down, Adrian is silent. I ask if the sacrifice the handsome, green-eyed girl (later known as Sta. Petka) was for Christ, or for the nation. Adrian explains it is hard to understand how connected national and religious identity were, and that coming with the high Turk was no question for Petka, because if he took her she must be a Muslim. Whether Petka's act was a sacrifice for God or for the country, is impossible to say, Adrian insists, because these identifications were impossible to separate back then. But today, he says, it is different. “Today, in light of today, being Macedonian and Christian are two separate identities of a person.” Adrian says these two identifications are “no longer in the same race,” to explain that they are not to be linked. I will tell more about this later.

Smith the historian tells that during the Ottoman time, the initiation ritual for members of the rebel group VMRO included placing the hand on a knife, a gun and a Bible, according to the *Museum of the Macedonian Struggle*. This use of the Bible can be interpreted differently; as a demonstration of honest intentions, a prayer for God's help, and a belief that the uprising is God's will. If the belief was sincere, and the motivation equally distributed between the uprising as God's will and the uprising for the sake of the nation, does that mean there is no limit between the national ideals and *vera*? Here one can open for the necessity of interpreting *vera* in its broadest sense, meaning all matters which people can believe in, even secular ones. And in situations where initiation rituals include a clearly religious artifact, one can understand that the limits between religious *vera* and secular *vera* become vague.

A Theoretical Model

This model is designed to sort and understand the national identification and religious identification together. It is based on the three-parted world image; Heaven, Earth, Hell. These three components are present in the model, as metaphors, and for their literal meaning in that people seem to host similar emotional attachments to these as to variables I will mention; Heaven with Christianity, Earth with the nation and Hell with the condition as conquered by a non-Christian power.

The model is very much inspired by the theories of Binns. Professor John Binns (director at the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge), in the book *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, explains into three periods of nationalism emerges from Eastern Orthodox Christianity. First comes the Christian empire, "in which universalism combined with Christian rule to produce a vision of Christian world order", and second, that of oppression when a non-Christian, foreign power. This often has universal aspirations, dominated and sometimes even oppressed the churches. Third comes the growth of national consciousness. "These three great communal experiences of controlling, being controlled and independence should be incompatible, but in reality they exist together in the self-consciousness of the Churches and shape the present attitudes to the state."¹⁴¹ This Christian empire was to last for over a thousand years, and shape the nature of the Eastern Church. Church and state worked together, both wanting to uphold Orthodoxy, hunt heresy, extend the empire and protect the church.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 161

¹⁴² Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 163

The second great experience was to be within another great empire, this ruled by a non-Christian power¹⁴³. Under the Ottomans Christians and Jews were counted as 'people of the book', and not as polytheists¹⁴⁴, and had legal status.¹⁴⁵ A part of this was the blood tax, and because of the law systems, Christians simply had to endure humiliations such as blasphemies from Muslims, and lacked certain civil rights. Binns says the churches were weakened from within, the members of the Christian communities connived.¹⁴⁶ Christians who preached to Muslims, or Muslims who converted, risked death penalty. The church became more closely associated with the national groups than with the empire. Binns compares millets with nations, which Christians identified with, rather than with the empire.¹⁴⁷ The process of having a great Christian empire, being a subject in a non-Christian empire, and going through the development of nationalism is still a continuing process. The absence of centralized administration has opened up for ecclesiastical bodies to mirror political realities of more local sorts. So as empires perish it is, to Binns, more natural that also the church breaks up into smaller units. Where the empire stops, nationalism begins. The history of nationalism within Orthodox churches is long, and characterized by opposition to centralizing empires. The identification of these churches with ethnic and nationalist groups is one of the factors that have kept them alive through hostile discrimination. That the Ottoman Empire was Muslim gave no room for longing back to the days as subordinate to it.¹⁴⁸ Since Serbia claims the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Bulgaria claims the Macedonian language, and Greece claims the territory, both Macedonia and the Macedonian Orthodox Church have a precarious existence.¹⁴⁹

One reason why the model uses the three-parted world image with Heaven, Earth and Hell, is that these are, as metaphors, well-known and easily understood. The arranging of Heaven, Earth and Hell is commonly understood, as are the contents of them. Everyone with a basic understanding of Christianity knows Heaven imagined as a good place or a delightful condition, Hell is the contrary; a bad place or a painful condition, while Earth can have varied selections of the qualities of both Heaven and Hell, and, is, according to my impression, most often characterized as flawed. In this model I put the components Heaven, Earth and Hell in context with *Christianity, the nation and being conquered by a non-Christian power*. This context is because I

¹⁴³ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 169

¹⁴⁴ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 171

¹⁴⁵ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 172

¹⁴⁶ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 175

¹⁴⁷ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 176

¹⁴⁸ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 178f

¹⁴⁹ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 186

find that the people consider both Christianity and Heaven flawless, the nation and Earth good, bad and overall incomplete. Another similarity between how people regard Earth and how people regard the nation is that both inform and are informed by Christianity, Earth as God's creation and the nation as promoting and promoted by Christianity. One example of this is the Christian heritage people find in the fact that Macedonia is mentioned in the Bible. Hell and the state of being conquered by a non-Christian power are not quite so easy to compare, since I so far have not discovered anyone comparing the life under the Ottoman Empire with Hell, neither books nor respondents. Mønnesland stated life under the Ottomans had more freedom than under the Habsburgs, which speaks against this theory. But Binns' description above, about the experience of being under a non-Christian power, has laid a fundament for comparing the state of being conquered with the idea of Hell. Some interviews will later be used to support and criticize this comparing, later in the chapter.

The theory does not have to be true, but it will serve a purpose in this thesis; to explain national attitudes and religion together. It will contribute in explaining limits between nationality and religion, and show how religion and national attitudes affect each other. The theory will put the different variables; nation and attitudes to this, in context with religion. Let me explain the theoretical model, before comparing it to some views of members of the different churches.

The image and metaphor of Heaven has similarities with the image of Christianity, which itself is characterized as flawless. The nation is known and accepted by Christianity, and respondents say God accepts all cultures. The nation is the place where many people met God, where Milo says their vital needs are provided for, and Alex says God wishes to be worshiped in all languages.

The image and metaphor of Earth has similarities with the image of the nation called Macedonia, with all its flaws, and all the benefits and disadvantages of belonging there, all the flaws in the church and need for forgiveness and tolerance, for example people refusing to recognize the country, church and ethnicity.

The image and metaphor of Hell has similarities with the idea/historical remembrance of being conquered by a non-Christian power, and people thank God it is over. Being conquered lacked rights to practice Christianity as freely as wished, and it limited the right to belong to a nation. Since the Ottoman Empire was Muslim, there was no room for longing back to it, according to Binns.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 178f

The purpose of the model is to understand and explain. I have now explained the different levels of the model, and we see how they become categories, where I believe one can sort the different attitudes of believing people in Macedonia. The model can show how different attitudes to the religion and to the nations can coexist within believing people. The model does this by linking religious feelings and attitudes with secular feelings and attitudes. To use and test the model, I will see if the data from a selection of interviews can fit with the categories and the descriptions of them.

Interviews with People from the Evangelical Church

Anne says the ethnic and religious identifications are tied together. She considers this “religion by birth” a common feature for both Macedonians and Albanians. Evangelical Christians are exceptions from this, she says, and calls them born again, thus having *vera*, and not just *religija*. *Vera*, embracing spiritual engagement, seems to be regarded as necessary to separate cultural heritage from religion. Evangelion says the same. According to him the Macedonian Orthodox Church binds church, faith and nation. This is an obstacle to missionary work, both respondents say. Evangelion says “The Orthodox Church has no mission, it is in the name: If you are for example Roma or Serb, then what can you do in the Macedonian Orthodox Church?”

Ivana agrees many Macedonians stand for “religion by birth”; that born Macedonian includes being Macedonian Orthodox. Ivana herself splits the religious and national identifications, saying she is fifty percent ready to defend her faith, and equally ready to defend her national identity. Ernest Gellner’s¹⁵¹ words, in the introduction chapter, explain how secular nationalists love their nation because they love their nation, in the introduction chapter, and only value religion for promoting the nation, agrees. I say beloved food traditions and other cultural phenomena are enough to create strong national identifications. As can, certainly, the experience of the nation being under threat, as Alex will tell more about. Ivana says her country needs her, to, among other things, work for lower abortion rates, to slow down the decreasing number of Christians born in Macedonia. Ivana considers it a Christian value to intend to do something for the country if one expects to get something back from it. Ivana does not mention the Ottoman Empire, or anything else I can link to Hell in this model. One might place being conquered as a situation of the nationality being disrespected. The middle level in the model, about the nation with all its flaws being equal to the Earth, works well considering Ivana’s intention to work for the country. She talks about a decreasing number of

¹⁵¹ Hvithamar, Warburg, Jacobsen, *Holy Nations and Global Identities*, 102f

Christians born in Macedonia, which indicates that her work intention is focused on Christianity, and her nation. This indicates they inform and are informed by each other, and that she considers Christianity necessary to the country. One sees this in the fact that she mentions the country, instead of the city, the region or the Balkans.

Elena says she is representing a minority since she is a Protestant. She explains those parts are in conflict in her personality and set of values. Elena says the values of the Evangelical Church are more Western than in the Orthodox Church, which is founded on more Eastern values. The Muslims in Macedonia have different values, and this sometimes lead to conflicts. Elena identifies closest to faith, than to nationality or ethnicity. To Elena, the nation is not necessarily the place where one meets God, and the nation as the cultural frame thus becomes problematic. The nation has its flaws; she might wonder why God placed her in an Orthodox Christian land, or the opposite: why God lets Macedonia be Orthodox, and not Protestant. I believe the second option is more likely; Elena expresses affection to her home country, therefore I imagine she might wonder why her God did not let Protestantism be the majority religion. Therefore, when comparing the model with Elena's views, I would write "question-marks" on the middle level. The Ottoman Empire, which increased the number of Muslims in Macedonia, can to Elena, mean one root of the conflicting value systems in Macedonia today. The Ottoman Empire causing today's conflicted situation is not enough to compare the Empire with Hell. Elena does not, either, say anything negative about Islam or any Eastern value system. Thus, the data Elena has shared do on some points support the model, and in some points not.

Adrian says that in certain times Christianity and national identification came together, for example during the time of Ottomans. *Macedonian* has meant *Christian* for so many years, and some of these attitudes remain, Adrian says. He states that there is nothing bad in it, because of the history. Adrian refers to the Bible quote, which says before anything people are citizens of Heaven, and national identification comes afterwards. Adrian says being Christian and Macedonian are two totally different identities of a person, "just as you are a friend, husband, brother and son at the same time. Christian and Macedonian are simply different things, like water and lemonade, it can't be said what comes first." Adrian continues by illustrating this with the metaphors that *Christian* and *Macedonian* are not in the same competition, like a swimmer and a runner are not in the same race. The Bible says one should choose Christianity in front of anything, in Heaven there will be people from each nation and tribe, and the Macedonian nation has been a tribe. God recognizes there are groups, Adrian believes. It was impossible to separate national and religious identifications in the past, but

not anymore, Adrian continues. He says the different identities are not in the same race, which means they could not possibly be compared to one another, or compete with one another (he illustrates by comparing with a runner and a swimmer not being able to be compared with one another). But model is only valid if the variables called national attitudes and religion have some sort of relationship to each other. Or is it? The model is not depending on competition between religion and national identity, and includes belief in God's active participation in history, which Adrian does not deny. And Adrian talks about God's recognition of different tribes and nations, which supports the middle level in the model, by showing belief that Christianity understands and accepts the nation. Adrian's words about God recognizing tribes and nations also shows an image of an understanding God, which contributes to the flawlessness of Christianity in the upper level of the model.

Anne says Macedonians mix ethnicity and religion. She also says the members of the Evangelical Church as exceptions from this, and explains they are born again, which, I say, indicates *vera*. From this one can understand Anne thinking members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church as only having *religija*. From what Ivana says about religion which does not need personal engagement, one can understand *religija* as the religion which is not separated from the rest of the cultural heritage, as *vera* embraces the spiritual engagement. To separate the religious identity from the historical and the ethnic heritage, one needs *vera*.

Alex' first encounter with *vera* was in the Evangelical Church. Alex does not link his religion and his nationality, he claims, but agrees in what Ivana calls "religion by birth", when discussing Christianity and national identity in Macedonia. Religion comes before anything else to Alex, but in moments like the conflict with Greece, national identity temporarily increases to a competing level. These identifications are sometimes competing to Alex. He says he is trying to stay Heaven-oriented, he says, meaning he tries to put religion highest. But when hearing about the name conflict with Greece, his national identification gets the highest place, temporarily. How can that be put together in this model? This experience has nothing to do with the model, I say, rather with the theories by Chidester and Linental, that say the sacred space is precarious and needs to be claimed.¹⁵² Nationalism is always a problem, Alex states, saying the teaching of the Bible is Heaven-oriented, and that, to God, Jew or gentile makes no difference. Alex says that "thinking nationalism" is in contrary to thinking how God thinks. Alex also confesses belief that God desires to be worshipped in accordance to culture and nation. "In this way, people can relate to God closely and intimately," Alex says. God accepts the nation, in Alex' view, who says God wants to be worshipped in different languages, and

¹⁵² Chidester and Linental, *American Sacred Space*, 17f

there will be avjar – a Macedonian spread made from chili – in Heaven. The model works very well when analyzing the data he has shared, he claims not to link religion and nationality but acknowledges the nation (meaning to him here the culture) as the frame through which Christianity is understood and met. But Alex does not consider Hell is equal to being conquered. He approves of Turkish culture, and feels positive connections to certain sides of it. The arranging of Christianity above the nation is equal to a hierarchal arranging to Alex, since he places his religious identification above his national identification.

Eric says national identifications, religion and ethnicity are very tightly connected in Macedonia. It is possible in some way, he claims, to separate these forms of identifications, but this is very hard. For missionary work Eric considers nationalism a problem, because people put religion or *vera* near to nationality. “And that is bad stuff. Jesus was a Hebrew, so it doesn’t matter.” Eric also considers nationalism a problem for making people not work well together. Evangelion says that for the last twenty years things have changed, considering ethnic identity in the post-Yugoslav time. Yugoslavia was one country, but there were no Yugoslavians, he explains. The division of Yugoslavia happened around the question of ethnicity, especially in Macedonia, Evangelion says. He further argues that Macedonia is still fighting to be recognized. This fight, he says, makes it important to be Macedonian. “If we are not this, then what?” He thinks Macedonia should not be depending on being recognized by anyone. “So, first comes ethnicity, then comes religion.” To sum up the attitudes within the Evangelical Church, Anne, Ivana, Alex and Eric agree the majority have religion by birth, that their nationality and ethnicity decides their religion. Evangelion adds that they are binding church, faith and nationality. All who speak about Evangelical Christians in this, say they are exception, and have active *vera*, which seems to mean they have discussed and reflected their religion and their national identification in accordance to each other.

Ivana, who says her country needs her, splits the religious and national identifications, says she is fifty percent ready to defend her faith, and equally ready to defend her national identity. Elena explains her belonging to a religious minority are in conflict in her personality and set of values. Alex does not link his religion and his nationality. Religion comes before anything else to Alex, who believes God desires to be worshipped in accordance to culture and nation. Adrian claims there is no connection or material for comparison between religious and national identifications. But, like Alex, he says Heaven has be people from each nation and tribe.

Among the people asked to fill out a questionnaire, 7 of 25 in the Evangelical church answered that their religious and national identifications work well together, complete each other well and cannot

be separated. 9 respondents said these two identifications work well together, and 19 said they value their faith more. My impression, that all members of the Evangelical Church have separated their religions and national identifications, appeared to be wrong. But the statement given by for example Anne, that the Evangelical Christians are born again, does absolutely not have to be wrong, in that separating national and religious identifications does not contradict being born again. But one conclusion I would like to draw is that the co-existence of national and religious identifications are – compared to each other – complex and varying. People I interviewed qualitatively claim to separate the identities, but belief like *avjar* in Heaven show how the variables are not unaffected by each other, since the image of Heaven gets a product of traditional food. But despite not unaffected by each other, the identifications can still be separated.

Interviews with People from the Macedonian Orthodox Church

Like Alex and Evangelion, Milo also thinks problem with Greece can be the reason why many people call themselves “Macedonian” before mentioning religion, if asked to tell what describes them (Milo himself would say Christian first). One reason for this may be both churches (including the Theological Faculty) being without different, pervasive, teachings about how to react in such situations. Milo says the Macedonian Orthodox Church is nationalistic, like the other Orthodox Churches on Balkan. Milo disapproves the Church having this nationalistic orientation, saying the church is for Christ and not the nation. According to Milo, the church is responsible for not being identified with nationalism, ethnicity, or any national identification. This can be considered in consensus with what Evangelion says, and, certainly, with Martin saying same as Milo, that the church should not be identified with any nation. What can explain this consensus? I would like to propose a common ideal that the church should be including, and relate this to ideas that an including church can make the society better. It can also be related the mission commandment in Matt 28:18-20. Evangelion has mentioned this previously. Evangelion said the term *Macedonian Orthodox Church* excludes non-Macedonian people. But Milo says that “the mission is to avoid being identified with nationalism or ethnicity, stay away from all national identification. The mission has always been to bring people together, not separate, no matter of ethnicity.” Religion, and the church, have the responsibility of not being mixed with nationalism, Martin says, explaining that if nationalism is mixed with church and faith, there will be problems. The respondent mentions the tension with the Serbian Orthodox Church, refusing to recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Since the Serbian Orthodox church's Patriarchy is based in the Ohrid Orthodox Church, Martin illustrates this with a daughter refusing to recognize her mother giving birth to her, and characterizes it as a political intruding in the church.

Milo says it is wrong to mix national and religious identification closely together, and explains religious identity often gets manipulated and abused by the ethnical identity. This risk is to him the reason why they should not be too closely mixed together. "I claim religion to be interpreted above nation, religion comes first." I find Milo an excellent example to compare with this model. Milo's words that Christianity shall be placed above nation can prove ideas of its superiority, and that, like with Alex, the model resembles with a hierarchal structure, with Christianity on top. Saying religion should not be closely mixed with national identifications because of the risk of the religious identification getting manipulated show attitudes to the national identification as flawed, and even harmful. To look at the middle level, Milo expresses attachment to his country by talking about a need to be in Macedonia, and does not believe in coincidences, which shows a belief in God placing him in Macedonia for a purpose. Milo speaks about Macedonia providing with all necessities, and one sees, in these comments, a good consensus with the middle level in the model. At the end, Milo says Macedonia has inherited several negative aspects from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire might be used to explain problems in Macedonia. Milo also gives the Ottoman Empire the blame for abolishing the Macedonian Orthodox Church, when talking about the beginning of the church in "Continuity with the Past". There is, which makes sense with the model and with Binns' words, no room for nostalgia back to the Ottoman times.¹⁵³

"I think of ethnicity as religion between Church and state", Markus answered to the question about his religion and his national identification, continuing with a reflection about church and state, calling them separate branches. These influence each other, the laws the Church promote come from the state. The Church bring people together, the state has mutual benefits. These can collaborate, which benefits both. To Markus, Church comes first and Macedonian identity secondly, explained with Jesus being sent to the Earth for all people, not for one nation. Christianity does not confine to any ethnicity, he continues, and says nation and ethnicity does not fade away under religion, they co-exist. *Religija* and church are a result of *vera* bringing people together. Multiple religions, coexisting, are brought together by one state. The essence is that Church comes first, and Macedonian identity comes secondly. To Markus, Church comes first and Macedonian identity secondly, explained with

¹⁵³ Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*, 178f

Jesus being sent to the Earth for all people, not for one nation. Christianity does not confine to any ethnicity, he continues, nation and ethnicity does not fade away under religion, they co-exist. The essence is that Church comes first, and Macedonian identity comes secondly. Markus is another example of a member of the Macedonian Orthodox Church that is easily adapted to the model. But he does not express strong attachments to the nation here. Markus says Jesus is sent for all people, which can give associations to the mission commandment. This might indicate that Markus has a negative view of the Ottoman time, since it contributed to the spreading of Islam. But except from this, nothing Markus states can be seen as a view of being conquered under the Ottoman time being equal to Hell.

Mihajlo says, after confessing Orthodox Christian faith that his approach is serious, because everything he values is among the principals of orthodoxy. Mihajlo rejects empty behavior patterns, and says “it's not just something I do (...) no difference between teaching and my views”. Mihajlo says his religious and national identifications complete each other, and his identity is fulfilled by both. In history, no nationality was entrusted, in the time of Alexander the Great, there was religion and language, but there was still no nationalism in that land like today. The nation Macedonia is very young, and the idea of nationalism started in the 19th century, until then people were united under the Ottoman Empire. People did not divide themselves by nationalism, Mihajlo argues, and says today people do. Mihajlo claims this is temporarily, a phase to pass, and the part of the painful birth of a nation. In some ways mentality and mind must be changed, he continues, and says Christianity has good principles, like evaluation of every person's life, equality for all peoples, and free will. Christianity can be abused, but can generally do something very good, Mihajlo argues.

Mirek & Mihail tells about the belonging to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, learned Orthodox Christianity at school, come from a Macedonian Orthodox family and went to church as a child, when I ask about their religion and national identification. They say Macedonia is an Orthodox country, and most people belong to that church. Mirek & Mihail now study in the Theological Faculty, but finds it hard to explain the motivation for this choice of study. They quickly explain Mihail comes from Ohrid, which they call a “second Jerusalem on the Balkans”, with 365 churches. “The love for God is something we feel here”, they say and both place their hands on their chests, and continue: “nothing we say in words”. The national identification is rooted in various factors, most of then connected to Ohrid.

Nenad tells that eight months ago Macedonia celebrated its nationality, and it was the first time ever he saw national patriotism, claiming this was the first time he saw what it really means. “For me, my

religion is the Orthodox Christianity, but with my rules: I like to believe, I like going to church, and doing the cross sign when entering, pray, light candles and pray over them, but I don't like the preachers/priests.” Nenad continues with similar critics of Macedonian Orthodox priests. Nenad believes in mutual respect for all religions, and that the respect among human should not depend on religion. Therefore he would mention Macedonian first, if he was asked to tell what describes him. Nenad says he would not mention his religion, because people should not “evaluate from religion”, which refers to his belief in mutual respect for all religions.

Marta and Manev say they both value *vera* the most, and identifies with *vera* more closely than with the nation. They say one has the right to choose, and being Macedonian does not mean being Christian as well. Manev claims he knows a few Roma and Albanians, who, he states, are more like Macedonians than Macedonians themselves. Despite that both say they put more value in faith, Marta says she would mention the nation before the religion if asked to list what describes her. Manev said these two factors cannot be put together. Martin, Markus and Milo say the church should not be identified with any nation, and mention this as a mission and a responsibility. These respondents claim to identify with their religion first. Markus and Milo also claim their religious and national/ethnic identifications to co-exist. Mihajlo says his religious and national identifications complete each other, and his identity is fulfilled by his national and religious identifications. The national and religious identifications of Mirek & Mihail are explained as religion by birth, which includes strong *vera*.

Of the people asked to fill out a questionnaire, two of 30 from the Macedonian Orthodox Church said their religious and national identities complete each other very well, are balanced and cannot be separated. 14 said they work well together, 14 claimed to value their faith the most, and 12 said they value their national identifications most.

About one third of these were carried out by using the snowball effect, one third was carried out by approaching people in a park, and seven were fulfilled in the Theological Faculty. In the latter, all cards were filled out completely similarly. The two answers all seven people had chosen said their identifications work well together, and that they value their religious identities the most. One explanation could be that all seven cards were answered by the same person, which I know was not the case. Another explanation is that the respondents – all students – were highly concerned about the reputation of the faculty, and therefore decided to cooperate to give the impression they wished. Several events can have caused this concern, including my research. Another explanation is that the students recently had a discussion about this. One of my respondents from the qualitative interviews

was present at the time the questionnaire took place in the Theological Faculty. This might have started a conversation about my research, which ended in a consensus about their opinions.

Discussing and comparing

Milo and Martin say the church is obliged to avoid nationalism or association with ethnicity. To Milo this means the religious institution given moral responsibility; his idea is that the church identifying with nationalism and ethnicity separates, while the church's permanent mission is to bring together. The mission of the church thus becomes clear. Martin says a mix of the different identifications will cause problems, like the tensions between the Orthodox sister churches. He compared this tension with a family issue. Nenad mentions national identification a second option, calling oneself Macedonian instead of Christian, to avoid being *evaluated from religion*. This statement expresses two different options on how to evaluate fellow human beings. Eric, from the Evangelical Church, says nationalism a problem because it makes people not work well together. The people I interviewed agree the church should not be associated with nationalism or nationality. The church is characterized as responsible to avoid being associated with nationality. To the respondents from the Evangelical Church this responsibility is not characterized as a mission, to them it is more of a practical matter; to be an open, inviting and including church.

Both churches seem to agree that the individual has the freedom to identify – and being associated - with nationality and religion, but the church can only identify with religion.

Alex and Markus both talk about coexistence. Both say Christianity comes first, and ethnicity or rationality does not fade away under religion: but Alex expresses stronger attachment to the nation and culture on a religious level: God will be worshipped in all languages, and there will be avjar – a Macedonian spread made from chili – in Heaven.

In the Evangelical Church, Alex approves national pride and identification, which he believes God also approves. Evangelion says religion gives room to the importance of the national identification. Markus mentions his nation, ethnicity co-exist with religion. Mihajlo says his religious and national identifications complete each other, and his identity is fulfilled by both. Religion and nationality together is to him completing the needs for identity variables. Religion giving room for national identification is something several people in both churches agree about, while explaining it in different ways. Only Mihajlo, in the Macedonian Orthodox Church, confesses his identity being

complete with these two only. Others do not deny that nationality and religion complete their identity, but they do not state it either.

Markus discusses the church and the state together. He says the Church bring people together, the state has mutual benefits. These can collaborate, which benefits both, according to Markus. Only members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church mention the state and church together. But Elena has previously mentioned the responsibility of avoiding the abuse of *religija*, which I say can be connected to this cooperation of the church and the state. Markus and Alex talk about Jesus for all people, and explain the concept of nation becoming an unimportant unit considering this character. Alex argues nationalism is a problem, and explains why by underlining the Bible quote “Jew or gentile makes no difference.” The paradigm about Jesus being sent for all of humanity is not changed by national identifications. This is stated by several members of both churches. The respondents agree God loves all people equally, independent of nationality, I could conclude, since no data speaks against this.

Mirek & Mihail are an example of what Ivana calls “religion by birth”. Both Anne and Ivana say inherited *religija* does not need to include *vera*, but Mirek & Mihail confess *vera*. Their *vera* is strong enough to motivate their theology studies, for the purpose of joining the clergy. This attitude reveals local patriotic pride, it reveals sides of religion by birth the Evangelicals was not aware of, and it shows a difference from the minority church. No religion by birth is confessed by members of the Evangelical Church, and no geographical localities are mentioned as reasons for why they chose their *vera*.

Markus says one of the functions of the nation is to bring together different religions. Does this indicate that only the Macedonian Orthodox Church value religious coexistence? No, of course not. “Macedonia Today” concluded that no one I interviewed wishes religious or ethnic homogeneity. Ivana, for example, explains how she sees morality, focused on how to treat fellow human beings, as a Christian virtue. Ivana considers it a Christian value to intend to do something for the country if expecting to get something back from it. Her country needs her, she feels, and her job is to contribute to maintain Christianity, by working against abortions. This is an example of how religious ethics affects the attitudes about serving the nation. I consider it possible that religion and national identification together give faith in one’s idea on how to serve the nation, through a belief in God helping the serving individual.

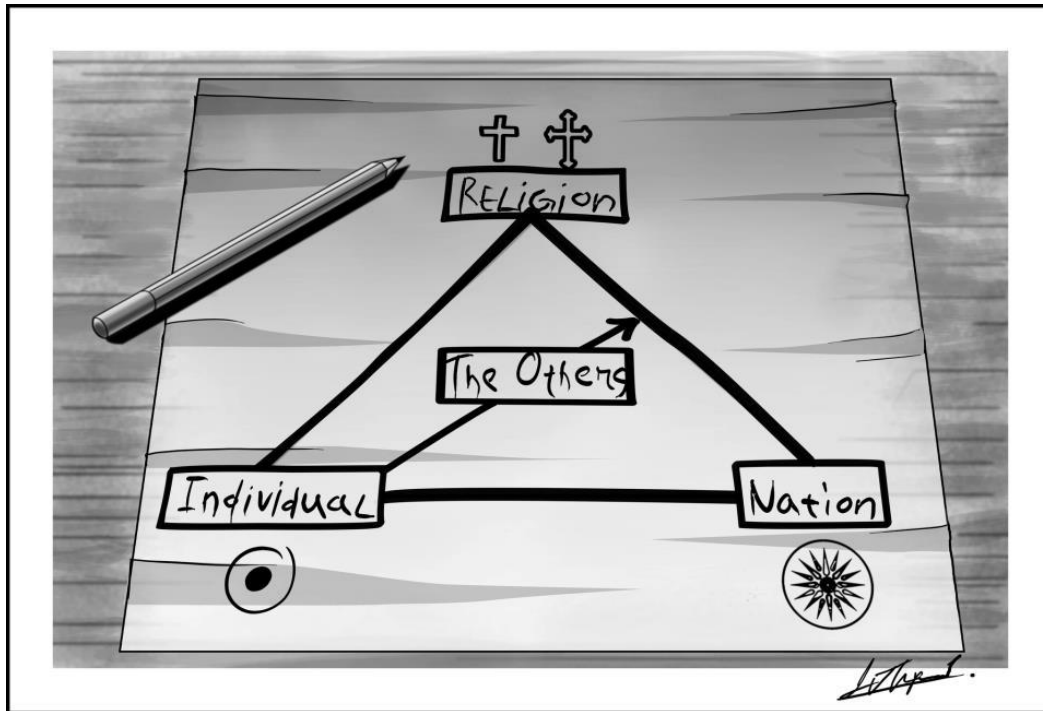
Among the people asked to fill out a questionnaire, nine in the Evangelical Church said the two different identifications work well together, and in the Macedonian Orthodox Church fourteen said the same. Nineteen people in the Evangelical Church said they value their faith more, and the people choosing this option in the Macedonian Orthodox Church were numbered fourteen. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church, twelve people claimed to value their national identifications more, which is probably due to many of the people found through the snowball effect, and by looking for random people in the park, were secular. I was assured many of the people contacted through the snowball effect are secular Macedonian Orthodox. In the Evangelical Church, only one chooses this option.

In the Evangelical Church, seven people claimed their national and religious identifications are in symbiosis, balance, complete each other and cannot be separated. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church only two people choose this option.

None in the Macedonian Orthodox Church said anything about the national and religious identifications competing or struggling within themselves. If one considers the answers from the questionnaire as well as the qualitative interviews, the attitudes from the Evangelical Church become more varying and more complex compared to those in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The experience of belonging to a minority church that has not been present in Macedonia for very long, many of the members experiencing changing from one religion to another: possible that the different identifications have been split. This may lead to new considerations of, reflections of and views on their national identities. It is possible that identifying with a small minority religion is influencing the national identification, and the binding of religious and national identification, in different ways for different people. It strengthens my theory that religion and national identification put on two different levels, or categories, but not unaffected by each other.

Religion and national identification – where goes the limit? Are these identifications one or two? I would like to conclude, from the differences in these answers, that the identifications might be two or one. If they are two, they can be loosely or tightly attached to one another, or not attached at all. They can also be so strongly attached the limits become vague. It seems like they never contradict or deny each other. They can be characterized as completely disconnected and independent of each other, and they can be characterized as completing each other, but are not trying to erase the presence of one another.

The Triangular Model



Sketch of the Triangular Model, which links religion, the individual and the nation, with fellow human beings – the others – in the middle. Illustration by Dimitar Gjorgiev

From the idea the model above makes clear, that the attitudes to religion can influence the attitudes to the nation, I composed a triangular model of the individual, religion, and nation with their own corner. The religion and the nation are aware of and accepting the existence of the other. Milo not believing he is born in Macedonia by a coincidence, and Alex believing there will be avjar in Heaven, are examples that support the Triangular Model. Other examples are the respondents saying that their national identifications and religion coexist, and telling about how these affect each other. The respondents who put demands on the interaction between national attitudes and the church require a fourth element being added to this triangle-model, and this I call “the others”, or “fellow human beings”. Christian ethics has commandments for human interactions, which is believed in and practiced by several respondents. Many of the statements that the Church should not be associated with any nationality or ethnic group, are making arguments that consider human interactions. Examples for this are Evangelion saying the church ought to be inviting and open for everyone, no matter ethnicity or nationality, and Milo saying the church identifying with nationality divides people. The arguments about the church’s interaction with the nation are founded in the consequences and value for fellow human beings. Therefore I place this element in the middle of the triangle, and draw a line from the corner where “the individual” is placed, through the middle of the triangle, where “the others” are, and to the line between “religion” and “the nation”.

“Religion by birth” can be explained by this model, if one draws a thicker line between “nation” and “religion”. I would say the appreciation and affection towards the nation – or the place – can increase, which can explain how Mirek & Mihail praise Ohrid. The relationship to the place and to the religion can thus strengthen each other. This can move our thoughts to the theories I mentioned in the introduction, where Iveković says religion and nationalism do not need to exclude each other, but might strengthen each other when people use all spiritual and cultural materials available in the struggle to re-define ruined group identity. Do people really use *all materials available* to re-define ruined group identity, and is the group identity really ruined? I find it over my capacity to answer the first question. But the importance of group-identity has been strongly underlined by members of both churches. It is still hard to think of the group-identity as ruined. I have the impression that the identification as Christian and as Macedonians fighting for independence was present and strong, in times like Yugoslavia, when the identity could have been ruined. But the use of symbols of continuity with the past makes one think something is ruined, to make it necessary to draw lines to the past, to repair it. The field work data show the same. Since Ohrid is a city and a lake, I say this is a matter of space, and not only country. This can be connected to the theory by Chidester and Linenthal say “the sacred space is inevitably a contested space, a site of negotiated contests over the legitimate ownership of sacred symbols.”¹⁵⁴ I see how this theory can consider Ohrid as claimed space, with plenty of churches and parts played in the church history. The model I have made for this chapter makes it – perhaps unfortunately – look very simple, the way religion and nation (or emotional attachment to a contested space) influence each other. This discussion can also be linked to Tweed’s theories about the four cronotypes of religion (the body, the home, the homeland and cosmos) inform and are informed by religion.¹⁵⁵ What comes first, affection to the place that strengthens the affection to the religion, or the opposite? From the example of Mirek & Mihail it can be both, they mention their origin immediately, but the affection for a place like Ohrid might be because of the many churches, and the city’s history as a religious focal point. Likewise, their dedication to their religion might be because of a belief that God created Macedonia, and that they, as Macedonians, ought to be dedicated to the majority religion.

What about the mission in the Evangelical Church? This can be answered with Evangelion’s words about the mission of the Evangelical Church is to lead people to God, and one can conclude with people like Evangelion, who have theological education, feel responsible to actively work for what is probably considered saving souls. It could also be answered with words like those of Anne, who say

¹⁵⁴ Chidester and Linenthal (ed.) *American Sacred Space*, 17f

¹⁵⁵ Stausberg, *Contemporary Theories of Religion*, 213

it is important to work for stronger *vera* among passive members of the Macedonian Orthodox majority. I would like to answer the question with what Ivana says about Macedonian needing her, to work for a lower abortion rate among Christians. Christianity can be considered necessary for the nation. This includes feelings of responsibility for the people inhabiting the nation, and is a responsibility rooted in the religion.

Corresponding with the commandment about loving the neighbor, and the discussion emerging from the three-parted model, I place *the others* in the middle of the Triangular Model. They are thus close to the religion, with the belief in God as the creator and the one commanding forgiveness, mission and love, and those who preach about God and reflect over the Bible also come in this category. The others are also close to the nation, since they inhabit it, have worked to develop it in the past and will inherit it in the future. These include other ethnicities than one's own, since the relationship to all people is affected by the relationship to God and to the nation. Examples of this are Greece's refusal to recognize Macedonia, and the other Orthodox churches on the Balkans refusing to recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but, of course, wishes for unity, integration and less tensions, and the friendships across ethnicity and religion. This also includes criminals and unsatisfying leaders. It also includes society issues. As Mirek & Mihail say, the identification with the nation is strong, but there are issues among citizens.

Several of the members of the Evangelical Church accuse the Macedonian Orthodox Church of linking national identity with religious identity. One should also think, from the name, that a nation church would have closer identification with the nation than a minority church. Is it so? Many of the interviewed members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church say other members do so; link religion to nationality, while they themselves claim to be different. How come? And are any of my respondents' examples of this religion by birth, where the *religija* (no *vera* present) is only a part of the cultural heritage? Mirek & Mihail start telling about Ohrid and religious upbringing when I ask about their religious engagement. But this is not match the description of *vera*-emptied *religija* by birth, because Mirek & Mihail confess *vera*. Since my research is focused on the Evangelical Church and mainly the Theological Faculty, very few of the respondents have *vera*-emptied *religija* by birth. In the case of the Theological Faculty, I would say a theology education does not attract people who are not engaged in *vera*. For the three passive members; Nenad, Marta and Manev, I can only conclude that these are reflected people.

But in the case of Marta and Manev, their attitudes can be understood differently. When I ask them about a Bible quote, where Macedonia is mentioned, they talk about Macedonia, and do not mention

anything religious. When looking through the interview with Marta and Manev again, I do not see them mentioning much religious. They only do when criticizing the commercial activity in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. “I love the Church, I love God, I love Jesus, but not the priests. Hundred years ago people went to them to have them do religious rituals, and the priests did them. Now the first thing the priests do is to tell the price for this,” Manev says. Marta adds that the Macedonian Orthodox Church has no goal but commercial gain. This critical attitude reveals an ideal of how the church is supposed to be, which can indicate engagement in the religion. But it can also indicate idealization of the past, and this ideal being used for the church today.

What about Adrian and Manev saying religion and national identification cannot be combined? Is the model combining religion with national identification? No, it is linking them and putting them in context towards each other.

Only people in the Evangelical Church mention Heaven when talking about this. Alex is an example, when saying he tries to stay Heaven-oriented (to explain that he values religion more than nationality), and when saying there will be people from all different nations in Heaven (and tribes, if one can add what Adrian says). What can explain this? This image of Heaven might have been preached in the church, or talked about among members. Another phenomena that stands out among the members of the Evangelical Church, is Elena and Ivana saying national and religious identifications are conflicting. I will discuss this later in the chapter.

Religion and National Attitudes Together

This chapter opened with an explanation of the meaning of the Macedonian word *zemja*, from the Lord’s Prayer, which thus appeared not much nation-oriented. This was followed by a little history, presented by Adrian and Smith the historian. Then the chapter started using interview data from the Evangelical church, and later from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, before comparing and discussing these. To explain, understand and put variables in context, I composed a theoretical model, based on the third-parted world image, and with the theories of John Binns in mind. This model was put up against views of respondents from the Evangelical Church, and later from the Macedonian Orthodox Church. What I find the most interesting, is that, as the model shows, the way people view the relationship between the religion and the nation is strongly influenced by the considerations towards fellow human beings. Examples are the view of the responsibility of the

church not being associated with nation is being characterized, by members of the Evangelical Church, for the practical consequences. For some members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church it is seen as a mission, also considering the consequences this has for human interactions. But members of both churches seem to agree that the individual has the freedom to identify and being associated with nationality as well as religion. The paradigm about Jesus being sent for all of humanity is not changed by nationality and ethnicity, both churches agree.

Some data worked well with this model, and some did not. Part of the purpose of comparing data with the model was to test the model, which served to explain much, but did not always prove itself useful. But in addition to the model sometimes being useful in explaining limitations, it also offered explanations in certain ways that national identifications and religion affect each other, which are, as I see it, parts of the conditions for setting limits between national identifications and religion. This is in the cases where limits between these two variables are vague. The Triangular Model was explained, with words and with an illustration. Many of the statements about the Church should not be associated with any nationality or ethnic group, are making arguments that consider human interactions. This is the most important phenomenon this model explained; how concerns about fellow human beings affect the view of the nation and religion together. In addition, the model explains how religion and nationality can strengthen each other. The chapter discussed geographical space and relationship to it, discovering differences between data from two churches here. I discovered nationality and birth place as reasons for the belief. The chapter also discussed the potential identifications considering missionary activity in the Evangelical Church. The next chapter will continue the discussions about the coexistence of religion and national attitudes, by focusing on what the respondents say religion can do for a better tomorrow for the nation – and for the people inhabiting it.

Ideas for Solutions – What can Religion do for a Nation with Tensions?

How does a society with visual nationalism and the ethnic situation in Macedonia influence people's view about the mission of their religion? What solutions do believing people picture, and how do the ideas within the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church look compared to each other? Where do they differ and meet, and what can be the reasons for this? All interviewed people have agreed that the society has problems, despite many people expressing positive feelings and even friendships with people of other ethnic backgrounds. Everyone asked had ideas for how to solve ethnic tensions, and everybody had optimism. How is this chapter's topic related to religion and nationalism in Macedonia? The topic of ideas for solutions is found in the linking of religion, the individual and the nation, which I presented in the Triangular Model. I placed "the others" in the middle of this triangle, which includes those one identifies with as "us", and those one considers "the others", for "the others" are the contrary to "the individual". These fellow human beings involved in this can be linked to the category of "the nation," because the way people relate to the nation is influenced by the people involved. These people are both those inhabiting the nation and those abroad, in Macedonia's case, because of the situation with Greece and other neighbor states. But fellow human beings can also be linked to the category "religion," because of the religious fellowship, and the moralistic commandments about interaction with fellow human beings. The category called "the others" can also be linked to the category "the individual," because of the individual being formed, recognized, expressed and understood in contact with others. Therefore I place "the others" in the middle of the triangle, because I count these as connected to all the surrounding elements in this model. Also, the relationship to "the others" is influenced by the relationship to the other elements in the model. If religion is acknowledged by the nation, does this mean religion should be acknowledged as useful, and helpful, to the nation? Does this, from the point of view of believing individuals, include a belief that religion will provide solutions to the problems of the time? And on the other hand, if the nation is acknowledged by religion, does that include, from the point of view of believers, that the religion postulates a recommendation for its followers to serve the nation, and solve tensions?

The first interviews I will refer to are from members of the Evangelical Church, followed by members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. After this the chapter will compare and discuss the results, using theories to explain reasons for differences. Other data that will be used in addition to the qualitative interviews are results from card questionnaires.

Ideas from Members of the Evangelical Church

Eric and Alex picture Jesus and faith as the solution, saying *vera* will bring peace to individuals and society, *vera* and forgiveness, as well as accepting one another's differences. Alex says Christian teachings will prevent moral decline. Alex says different national identities divides, finding people of non-Macedonian ethnicity do not identify with Macedonia. He finds this a problem. Alex explains the “narrow” side of Christian theology is that only Jesus leads to God, but Christianity also teaches respect for other people and their belief. The church shall engage in missionary work and pray for the Muslims, the respondent says. Alex pressures the generous side of Jesus, and the concept *passion and compassion*, and explains the passion is for God, and the compassion is to all people. Conflicts, Alex says, are caused by misunderstanding and stubbornness. According to Anne, religion is the main matter that can bring war and conflict, for example with the demonstration of Christian belief with the cross on Vodno, but states that the main reason is mutual hatred. She also sees religion as a solution. This includes both *religija* and *vera*. Leaders must teach Christians (who do not already know this) how to treat members of other religions. And she believes in mission, for both ethnic groups. Ivana agrees, saying “God can do miracles, he will choose those to be Christians, and choose those to evangelize.” Ivana also says Christianity increases patience and requires tolerance. Elena says there would be fewer conflicts if Macedonia was only Christian.

Another member of the Evangelical Church does not at all mention religious heterogeneity as a reason for conflicts. Adrian talks about his visit to the village Rostuche, where he heard Muslims bring baklava to Christian friends on Muslim holidays, and Christians bring eggs to Muslim homes during Easter. Adrian considers this good co-existence. There are similar cases in Skopje, and with Adrian's family. TV showed the opening of an old monastery, and Muslims helping out in the building process. But I will not state this as a disagreement between Adrian and Elena, or say Elena suggests homogeneity as an ideal solution. Her statement was answering a different question, and since a second interview with her never took place, I lack data about what her idea for a better tomorrow in Macedonia would be. WWJD (“What Would Jesus Do,” the motto about asking oneself what Jesus would do, before acting) is very important, Evangelion says, including praying for victims of conflicts. Young people who communicate hate and revenge cannot be changed, he explains, but instead WWJD becomes important. He underlines that Christians ought to act like Jesus, which requires knowledge, but also strength. “Weak people do revenge, strong ones forgive, which is not easy.”

Ideas from Members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church

Milo lives in a multiethnic environment, where the majority is Albanian. He does not feel unsafe, because he knows the people and has good relations with most of them. But many Macedonians there live in fear, Milo explains. The relations between the Albanians and the Macedonians were better in the past, but this is changing; and less and less Macedonians live there, because of the hard life and lack of money, people leave. It is also because lately, people live in fear of conflicts, “an Albanian child can spit on you and this can give you trouble, if it goes into politics... you would have to live there to see!” Milo thinks multiethnic culture could function well, if all efforts are put into it. Milo mentions the Good Samaritan in the Gospel. He quotes a Muslim friend, saying there should be Christian services in Albanian language, to evangelize. This use of language would get the attention of the Albanian population. Milo agrees, considering this a good idea. He explains this by mentioning that the religious groups were living together since centuries ago, and therefore the problem is probably not religious, but political. In politics they struggle all the time, he says, stating that ordinary people do not. The Good Samaritan and evangelization in Albanian language are solutions Milo suggests.

Nikola says the Theological Faculty has excellent co-operations with the Islamic faculty in Kondolovo, which takes the form of for example seminars and professor exchange. This can explain why several interviewed associates with the Theological Faculty have a positive attitude to Islam. But this starts looking different when Mirek & Mihail say Macedonia has a little trouble with some Albanians. “I don't know why they do what they do, the problem is not ours, we understand. Albanians are the troublemakers, of course not all of them, but, unfortunately, some.” This answer is an exception to other answers to this question, everybody else mentioned ideas. The explanation might be in the statement “the problem is not ours”, since it can be understood as a way to disclaim the responsibility of the tensions. When asked about the mission of religion in Macedonia, Mirek & Mihail say *vera* gives togetherness, which Martin agrees, adding that the mission is to make people do only the good. Mihajlo says the problem in Macedonia is the leaders, certain political figures who use conflicts to their own benefit. There are no problems between Muslims and the Orthodox Church, these coexist well, Mihaljo claims. Differing religions is not the problem, he continues, claiming there are century-long traditions for coexistence. Nenad agrees completely with this, and says the church should teach forgiveness. Mihajlo further argues that a good Christian is a good citizen, just like Milo says. Nikola also underlines forgiveness, by saying God loves all, and “love your enemies, as close brothers, a saying goes; love does not have enemies”.

The leaders' priority should be to look for unique things and not focus on differences. Nationalism is a problem, Mihaljo continues, Macedonian and Albanian nationalism propagated is not good, it is not healthy. I say that to give a definition one must separate between good and bad nationalism. Good nationalism is expression of national identity. I would like to connect the missing definition of bad nationalism to Mønnesland's theory about the two faces of nationalism, especially since Mihajlo's definition of good nationalism works well with Mønnesland's definition of the first face of nationalism.¹⁵⁶

Christianity is losing the sight, Markus argues, explaining that if people were more Christian there would be no major conflicts, the one in 2001 and World War II would not have happened. If Hitler had been more Christian there would have been no genocide, he determinedly states. The role of Christianity has never been different, Markus explains; to unite people under God. Markus uses conflicts as an indication of low Christian standard, which means that improved standard will reduce the conflicts.

Comparing and Discussing

The interviewed members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church see the solution as something microcosmic, Christian morality improving the individual believer and makes good citizens, thus conflicts are avoided. An exception is the idea Milo mentions, about Macedonian Orthodox services in Albanian language, for the purpose of evangelizing. The interviewed members of the Evangelical Church see the solution in the same way to a certain degree, but also in a macrocosmic solution. Elena is one of these representatives who only speak about religion as a changing factor of the individual. No one wishes that the Albanians leave their homes, no one wishes segregation. The respondents of the Macedonian Orthodox church believe religion will make "better" Christians, which shows a view of the conflicts caused by low morality. There are a few statements that can lead to ideas of missioning, but stronger are expressions of disbelief in missioning among Muslim Albanians. The respondents of the Evangelical Church see solutions in Christian ethics, and in more Christian people. This can indicate a belief that the conflicts are caused by religion. Religion mentioned as the cause of more negative things than conflicts.

¹⁵⁶ Mønnesland, *Før Jugoslavia, og etter*, 24

Mihajlo mentioned history of co-existence, and made a conclusion that the ethnic heterogeneity itself is not the problem. Holm's theories about the difficulties in removing symbols of evil if many of these have been attached to a folk group explain the root of the problem, after all Muslim Ottomans were the occupants for a very long time. According to the words of the respondents this is not the case, since they talk about contact and interaction. But they do mention lack of tolerance. It might therefore be going that way, or with some people it might be this way and others not. Nenad and Ivana mention making friends of other ethnicities and religions at the university, Markus mentions neighbors, others might have experienced becoming ethnically tolerant and forgiving through their religion and believe this can be the solution to the society, to make good citizens.

The results of the questionnaires show that in the Evangelical Church 18 said Christianity can teach humbleness and forgiveness, which will lead to tolerance and peace. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church a not very different number, 13, marked the same option. A quite similar number is the 9 in the Evangelical Church and the 12 in the Macedonian Orthodox Church, who agree the Bible teaches tolerance of religious and ethnic diversity. A much larger difference is the 19 people in the Evangelical Church, who agree Christianity can "spread the word of God, make all his disciples and thus remove reasons for conflicts and tensions." In the Macedonian Orthodox Church only 7 agree with this answer. In short, the card interview results seem to say the same as the data presented over, but show a little more support in mission, among the members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Macedonian Orthodox people believe the solution is in *vera*, while Evangelicals believe in *vera* and *religija*. One explanation is that Macedonian Orthodox Church has been a widespread majority for long, and when conflicts still occur, they might react by thinking it would serve the society if the Christians in Macedonia had more *vera*. The Evangelical Church is a young, small minority which gives space to hope and believe that if they grow the problems will cease.

The Evangelical Church values missionary activities, because their church was started in the motivation of following the commandment to make all people Christ's apostles, and their church would not be there if not for active missionary work. Evangelion said he has seen many people find God this way. The Evangelical church values informing members about important dogmas in Christianity, values giving people personal relationships with God. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church it has been stated that many members lack *vera* and knowledge about the essence, both by members and non-members. Nenad said himself that he has never opened a Bible. It is not hard to why the Evangelical church sees a solution in successful evangelizing, but why does not the Macedonian Orthodox Church do the same? Milo mentioned this, so I consider the missionary idea

present in the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but not as embracing and actively as in the Evangelical Church.

What is the reason why most interviewed people in the Macedonian Orthodox Church do not mention evangelizing in Macedonia? Have the leading part of this church gotten so used to the tying of ethnicity to *religija*, that the ethnic Macedonians are Macedonian Orthodox, the ethnic Albanians Muslims with a few Catholics, the Turks Muslims, the Roma Muslims or Christians, the Vlacks Macedonian Orthodox, the Serbs Serbian Orthodox, that the wish for this to change is not present? Is this a sort of ethno-religious tolerance gone further than the mission commandment? Can there be a subconscious “We are supposed to be Orthodox because we are Macedonians, you are supposed to be Muslims or Catholics because you are Albanians, they are supposed to be Muslims because they are Turks, etc”. If we take Holm’s theories about negative symbols attached to a group of people, and the difficulties of removing these symbols, I would like to ask if it is possible that “negative symbols” can be exchanged with “neutral symbols”, yet the difficulties of removing these be the same. The symbol Islam has been attached to the majority of the ethnic Albanian people, a symbol which, positive or negative, is very hard to remove. That might explain why Nenad doubts the success of missionary work among Albanians. But if so, why are the Evangelicals different? One explanation is that Evangelical Christians themselves have changed religious direction, from Orthodox Christianity to Protestant, Evangelical Christianity.

This chapter has used material from the previous chapters to work out the conclusion that will end this thesis. The Triangular Model and the ideas for society improvements in the respondents’ reflection about the religious institutions they informed me about are examples of this. But mostly, the chapter has carried on the discussion from all the previous chapters. Keys to understanding this discussion are rooted in the introduction chapter, where the topic, academic discussion, field work and terminology is introduced and explained. A basis for the discussion is given in the history chapter. In “Macedonia Today” the discussion fully starts, where the standard of Christianity and attitudes to the ethnic and religious heterogeneity is discussed, a discussion that is continued and completed in “Ideas for Solutions”. The ideas of a religious heritage and the responsibility for this, and the idea about God’s love for everyone, have worked as paradigm in this chapter.

The chapter that analyzed the statue of Alexander the Great contributed with something that may seem small, but gave insight in people’s relationship to a secular figure in the promotion of continuity with the past. Markus words about godlike image, a statement which the analysis approached with theories about the claiming of sacred space, have given an example of religion and

nationalism tightly combined. One strong, relevant difference was that most respondents did not express trust in the Alexander-figure or character as a possible solution for the issues in today's Macedonia.

This chapter started with data from the Evangelical Church, followed by data from the Macedonian Orthodox Church. After discussing and comparing the different attitudes, I spent much work in figuring out different possible explanations to why the people of the different churches have the different attitudes they have. I used different data from interviews to explain the importance of missionary work in the Evangelical Church, and I have used many theories. The theory about negative symbols becoming the object of unsolvable attachment to people answered many of the questions I asked in the end of the chapter. But for answering these questions, the theory needed a modification; I had to remove the adjective "negative" from the symbols.

I would like to repeat the question about whether there is belief in any timeless solution for the issues in Macedonia today. I believe there is. Among my respondents there are two different ideas about how Christianity can make the society better. One idea, that the Christian *vera* can make better citizens and thus make the society better, is found among respondents from both churches. The belief that Christian *religija* can make a better society, by increasing the number of Christians, is found among respondents from the Evangelical Church. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church I found both belief and strong doubt in the idea of missionary work.

Conclusion and Summary

It is August 2012, and the weather in Skopje is terribly hot. After leaving the central square by crossing the stone bridge, and walking past the statue of St. Cyril and Methody, one finds a medium sized, old Orthodox Church building. The air inside is chillier, and smells very much like old churches in Scandinavia, but the interior here is vastly more decorated. Several icons and frescoes cover the walls, one sees Biblical scenes, angels, and among several saints, Sta. Petka with her eyes on a plate. The saints' names are written on many of the icons, but my local friend does not know if any of them are not Macedonian. Small brass chandeliers and incense holders are decorated with grape leaf ornaments, a plant common in the wine land Macedonia. I see national expressions as well as religious expressions, in the interior of this church. This master thesis has discussed the coexistence of religion and different national attitudes. I have approached artifacts with nationalistic content, theories about sacred space and idealization of individuals and groups, analyzed and compared data about relevant topics and composed and challenged my own theories. The conclusion will start with the content of the last chapter, before telling what the thesis has altogether found out. The second part of this small chapter will be a summary of processes and conclusions from the whole thesis, before ending in a short, compulsory summary in Norwegian.

Conclusion

Except from Mirek & Mihail, all respondents who answered Christianity can help by making better citizens agree the problems of today's Macedonia are not caused by the non-Christian population. I find this one factor speaking against Holm's theory of negative symbols attached to "them", while plenty of positive symbols are attached to "us". I consider the situation a matter of a common belief in all people in Macedonia belonging to religions, but, according to the belief, many people are not following values well. This view comes forth in the chapter "Continuity with the Past," that brings up what people consider a religious heritage, and in "Macedonia Today," where people express dissatisfaction with Christianity in Macedonia today. This view is also to be seen in "Religion and National Attitudes Together." This chapter presents the view with theoretical models. The view is also seen in the data I use in this chapter, where it comes forth that people from both churches believe Christian values like forgiveness, generosity and humbleness can make the society better.

Many members of the Evangelical Church believe mission can make Macedonia a better place. This can be related to the idea presented in the chapter “Continuity with the Past”, and the thought in the second last chapter, that God’s love for each and every one is unaffected by nationality. This can be connected to a wish of a church everyone is part of. I use Elena’s words about Macedonia having less conflicts is Macedonia was only Christian, to conclude that the ideal of more Christian *religija* is based on the idea of religious homogeneity being easier than religious heterogeneity. No data I have found says that anyone I interviewed consider Islam a “bad” religion. Elena says Christianity and Islam have different value systems, but says nothing about finding the Christian one better. Neither do any other of the respondents. The thesis has compared her words with the words of Mihajlo, who says he respects Muslims’ serious approach to their faith. It seems not difficult to set these views together, to ideas of moral responsibilities in both Christianity about Islam, about following the moral and preventing atrocities. Many respondents, for example Eric, say the religious and ethnically heterogeneous society is vulnerable. The model presented in the second last chapter shows in a perhaps too simple way, how the consideration of fellow human beings sets the conditions to how people consider the connections between the religion and the nation, when churches are involved. The connections in the Triangular Model influence the view on for example mission. The views about missionary work are a feeling of responsibility for the nation, and a matter of the commandment in the Gospels. The conscious linking of oneself, the nation, and the religion in is a way to consider and reflect over one’s nation, fellow human beings and society, using religion; both *religija* and *vera*; as the glasses. Same can be said about the ideas of *vera* being ways to solve conflicts in Macedonia, an idea several members of both churches support. I consider this the essence of my master thesis. I consider all chapters necessary to make this clear.

Summary

The field work for this thesis took place in Macedonia 2012, and interviewed a selection of respondents in the Evangelical Church of the Republic of Macedonia, and the Macedonian Orthodox Church, most of these at the Faculty of Macedonian Orthodox Theology. In both churches the respondents represented a selection of theologians and laypeople, men and women, active and passive members, but most of all, people of different views. In the Macedonian Orthodox Church I interviewed theologians, theology students, and people who were neither. In the Evangelical Church I interviewed one theologian, men, women, and active members of different occupations. They were not asked the same questions, but I tried hard to get all questions answered from people of both

churches. The only exception for this was the question about the uninterrupted continuity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which I talk about in the chapter called “Continuity with the Past”. The interviews were mostly qualitative, but questionnaire was also completed, with an equal amount of respondents in both churches. This was, in the Macedonian Orthodox Church, not focused on the Theological Faculty, but on young people in different environments. The number of answers was 50. In the Evangelical Church in Skopje this answers to a representative selection, because the 25 answers is not much less than the around 30 members (above the age of 18) present at that service. The results from the questionnaire have been used to the chapters about national identifications and religion together.

The thesis started with an introduction that contained relevant information about the academic discussion, as well as definitions, and a discussion about my choice of topic. The field work was also introduced there, as was the respondents, since I used their answers early and found an early introduction necessary. To find key definitions on the linguistic and cultural conditions of the respondents, I used field work data. The introduction chapter also took the conditions of the respondents into considerations when defining the terms within the umbrella term *national attitudes*. The scientific discussion about nationalism and religion was introduced, of which some statements were criticized, and some used again later in the thesis. The history chapter presented ancient times, the debated history of Slavic peoples, and said identity this time was primarily defined by religion. Characters like St. Cyril and Methody were introduced, and their contributions to Slavic history in founding of the Cyrillic alphabet, and translations of Biblical texts to Slavic languages. The Cyrillic alphabet was later one if the cultural sides of the Great Schism, the next topic of the chapter, followed by some words about the shaping of the Orthodox Church. Next, the chapter introduced the Ottoman Empire, and Grande’s reflections about one of the consequences of this, for Islam and Christianity together. Christianity continued to be the theme, as the chapter described the role of the church under the Ottoman Empire. The church was, then, one of the conditions for ideas of national liberation, which the chapter looked at next, and which was the theme for the rest of the chronology.

“Macedonia Today” introduced the religious institutions this research has focused on. Further the chapter used field work to discuss media, and then the respondents’ views on Christianity today. The respondents also expressed no religious boundaries for who can identify with the culture and history, as well as doubt in homogenization making the society better. Many respondents talked about friendships across ethnic and religious lines. The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle was presented, and I discussed the use of religion in it.

“Continuity with the Past” showed respondents praising multiethnicity, when talking about Macedonia’s heritage. Respondents also stated that God loves all people equally. Evangelion uses Macedonia being mentioned in the Bible to stress generosity in Christian moral. Other reactions was the motivations to “work on” Christian heritage, taking further the discussion about the standard of Christianity in Macedonia today. People claimed needs to be called Macedonians, and many said anyone has the right to choose their own names. The chapter analyzing statue of Alexander the Great showed a general, limited belief in a timeless solution attached to the ancient king. Markus accused the image of being godlike, and the chapter made a deep analysis of the monument; the aesthetics as well as through theories of religion, focused on society and space. The comparing in the chapter contributed to insight in social interaction in the Evangelical Church, in the sharing of opinions. In writing this chapter I spent much effort in finding theories about nostalgia to golden ages. When relating these to the statue, lack of belief in the historical Alexander Makedonski, which to me indicates that this golden age is not shaping the glasses trough which most of my respondents see today’s Macedonia.

The chapter about religion and national attitudes together started by analyzing a few phenomenon from history, the way Adrian and Smith recounted them. Then the chapter started comparing and analyzing data from interviews with people from both churches, and set their attitudes up against a theoretical model, based on the three-parted world image of Earth, Heaven and Hell. Later I composed the Triangular Model, to explain different matters. The belief I found in a timeless solution for the religious tensions in Macedonia today is in Christianity. This comes forth strongest in the last chapter, but also in the chapter about Christianity and nationality together. Both of the theoretical models showed how attachments to religion and to the nation can be connected, tightly or loosely tied to each other. Both of the models also helped understanding the ethics in this discussion. The last chapter looked even deeper into the variables called religion and nation. It took the thread from the idea that religion and nation relate to each other, and that the nation called Macedonia has issues. Putting this in context I asked in the last chapter what people think religion can do to help solving the social tensions in Macedonia today. Discussing and comparing the data from the interviews with people from the two churches has given understandings on what they consider the solution might be, and what they consider source of the problem is. The first took form in the respondents from the Evangelical Church seeing help in Christian ethics, as well as missioning, and the respondents from the Macedonian Orthodox Church seeing help nearly exclusively in Christian ethics. Discussing why has been extraordinarily interesting and rewarding to me. I have found so much optimism.

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